University of Minho
School of Architecture

José Manuel do Couto Ramos Capela

Operating conceptually in art
Operating conceptually in architecture

August 2012

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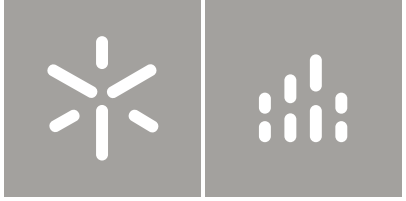

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Operating conceptually in art
Operating conceptually in architecture

PhD Thesis
Architecture / Architectural Culture

Supervisor:
Professor Vítor Moura
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Annex 3

STATEMENT

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Operating conceptually in art

Operating conceptually in architecture

This dissertation is about the architecture project. It addresses the issue of whether the architecture project can acquire *artistic* relevance through factors other than its *formal* quality, using the group of phenomena historiographically identified as “conceptual art” as a reference, considered mainly from an operative perspective. The arguments are organised based on two conditions necessary for a work to be considered ''conceptual'':

(1) The work is the literal translation of an idea.

(2) The work reveals infrastructural aspects of artistic practice.

In order to address these two conditions, I begin by explaining the contours of each and their implications on the field of art and then test their applicability in the scope of project design.

This discussion will lead, on the one hand, to the establishment of parallels between art and project that are useful in order to the proposed definition of “*artistry* of the project” and, on the other hand, to finding the limits for the applicability of the operating model of conceptual art that result from the differences between art and project.

index

introduction

theme

This dissertation is about the architecture project. It is about the project in its conventional sense – the sense which, from an operative point of view, is given to it by Alberti in the Renaissance. "Project" is therefore understood as the result of the architect's work (the work that corresponds to "designing projects") and as an entity which determines beforehand what a given artifact will be or might become. In this sense, "architecture project" and "work of architecture" are synonyms. Despite the fact that, in common language, a "work" is the material entity that results from the execution of the project, here I shall maintain that the project is a "work of architecture" in its own right. It is autonomous as an artistic entity, irrespective of its (potential) execution at a later time.

I say that a project defines an "artifact" also because in as far as concerns the object of the project, this dissertation is fairly conventional. I shall always make reference to projects that seek objectual entities. Even when I make reference to projects at urban scale, they define the forms of public buildings and spaces, and never entities as abstract as a territory or the landscape. On the other hand, in the universe of artifacts, I shall limit myself to those whose purpose is effectively to be inhabited. I shall examine artifacts whose reason for existence is to serve as a support for actions (and whose validity depends on their effectiveness as a support), to the detriment of others that serve merely for contemplation or to provide a certain "unique" experience (and whose validity is limited to the brief duration of that experience). We could say that I shall only examine artifacts that serve for things to happen in them – and not those which are themselves the event. A work made by architects such as, for example, the *Blur Building* (a cloud of vapour which is planned to provide a sensory experience for those who enter it) shall be used as a reference for the development of the argument but, strictly speaking, is not included within the thematic scope of the research.

Notwithstanding the fact that the project is a work of architecture even if it is not built, it is only architecture if it refers to an artifact which, when built, will serve to be inhabited.

Within the scope of the architecture project as I have just enunciated it, I intend to discuss a concrete possibility – that of the project acquiring *artistic* relevance through factors other than its *formal* quality.

By relativizing the value of form I do not mean to diminish the pertinence of the *project as an artistic practice* and the *validity of the work as an artistic product* (as occurs, sometimes, in perspectives on architecture centred around its social relevance or matters of technical effectiveness). I simply seek to define a framework for evaluation of the project that is not based on the *sculpturization* of the construction and the formal eloquence of the space, and which is not translated primarily through its photogenic appeal or even through senses metaphorically conveyed by form. I shall identify and discuss another specific acceptation of

artistic. More specifically, I shall do so taking as reference the set of phenomena historiographically identified as "conceptual art" in order – *and this is the purpose of this dissertation* – to test its applicability within the scope of the architecture project.

I shall, therefore, discuss the architecture project and construct a particular perspective on that which is artistic therein, using a theoretical framework taken from conceptual art as a reference – a fact which raises a few problems.

The first of these relates to the actual difference between art and architecture and, consequently, the pertinence of using a set of concepts and arguments created within the scope of the artistic as a reference in order to examine the architecture project. I should clarify that it is not my aim to build a perspective based on diluting the frontiers between art and architecture (a dilution which tends to stretch from the primary formal analogies between works of visual art and works of architecture, to the speculations around disciplinary hybridisation which, as I mentioned, are foreign to the scope of this dissertation). I start off from the principle that the purposes of art and of the project are distinct. I resort to conceptual art to the extent that it can serve as reference for the construction of a hypothesis specifically relative to the architecture project. In this sense, I shall circumscribe its consideration to the scope of questions of an operative order. Conceptual art will serve as a reference, not so much in its ontological dimension as art, but mainly as an operating model. "*How* it is done" (and the consequences that arise therefrom) will be more important than "*why* it is done". Although "why art is created" and "why projects are created" are distinct themes, "how art is made" and "how projects are made" are themes which, at least in as far as concerns the conceptual universe, I believe it is possible to relate.

In addition to these considerations of a general nature, the pertinence of referring to arguments concerning the project in conceptual art shall be discussed, throughout the dissertation, specifically according to the different aspects mentioned.

method

The fact that conceptual art has been used as reference for the construction of the argument is also reflected in the research methodology adopted. The work started off with bibliographical research on conceptual art and the analysis of the works of art mentioned in that bibliography. This is a quite specific bibliography. That which is called "conceptual art" is a fairly recent set of phenomena (beginning in the mid-1960s and dissipating in the mid-1970s) and, both to its advantage and disadvantage, the actual definition of "conceptual art" continues to be a subject that is non-consensual between artists, critics and historians.

At first sight, the manifests of the artists who claim they are conceptual are strongly partisan or, when compared to each other, divergent. The definition of an artistic movement called "conceptual art" therefore resulted from a synthesis performed, to a large extent, by critics and historians. It resulted from the amalgamation of a set of artistic phenomena, apparently performed against the will of many different artists,

either because they did not accept being classified in this way, or because they doubted the pertinence of the actual category "conceptual art". In this way there are two difficulties in the stabilisation of this category: one in relation to the desire of some artists to keep their distance from the idea of "conceptual art" and another in relation to the differences between those who accept they are or claim to be conceptual. This may be the reason why conceptual art was institutionalised without univocally enunciating what this type of art *is* – without having reached an agreement as to the criteria that distinguish what can and what cannot be included within the scope of this type of art. More common are partial debates on attributes that are only applicable to subtypes of works or of artists. Instead of determining "what conceptual art is", what is frequently discussed is "what conceptual art can include".

My intention of using conceptual art as a reference in order to create a framework to examine what is *artistic* in the project (an intention that had a relatively intuitive origin) therefore found a historiographical adversity. Although I do not wish to defend that the categories which are created or instituted throughout history need to be stable, the category "conceptual art" does still suffer from excessive instability.

In view of this fact, in order to carry out a discussion that assumes the existence and the cohesion of the phenomenon called "conceptual art", what I would start off by proposing is *one* definition of that kind of art. More specifically, instead of conceptual *art*, I propose to define the conceptual *art work* – through two prerequisite conditions for a work to be classified as such:

(1) The work is the literal translation of an idea.

(2) The work reveals infrastructural aspects of artistic practice.

I shall not clarify the exact contours of these two prerequisite conditions at this point, nor what they imply. I shall do so during the dissertation. However, I would like to underline the operative nature of both. The former is related to the mechanisms through which the work is obtained and with its constitution; the latter with the operativity of the work in as far as regards the self-reflexive function it fulfils. It is precisely because the definition of conceptual art that I propose (based on the characteristics of the work) has an operative nature that I believe it is possible to establish a parallel between that art and the architecture project. "Mechanisms for obtaining the work" and "self-reflexive function of the work" are themes that can be considered both in art and in the architecture project.

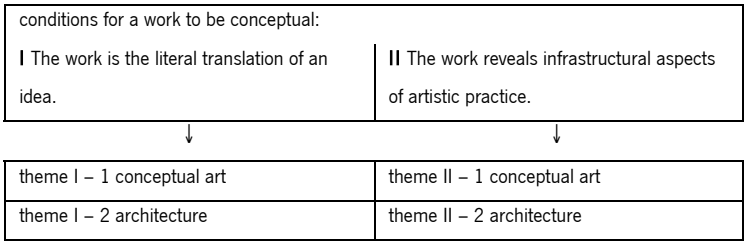
The fact that the discussion on the project that I will develop uses conceptual art as its reference has a direct repercussion on the knowledge that will be evoked. The theoretical reference framework that I have adopted and used in my arguments is what I discovered in the bibliography about conceptual art: the manifests that founded this category, the texts of several artists and critics who discuss (both at the time and retrospectively) and, also, the texts that serve as a reference to those texts.

Seeing that, in as far as concerns conceptual art, my research focused on "bibliography *about* conceptual art", one of the assumptions of this dissertation is that this bibliography should operate as a

selection filter for the vast number of existing primary sources. From the universe of catalogues, manifests, articles and interviews published *by*, or *about*, conceptual artists, I specifically examine those that are contemplated in that bibliography. This dissertation has no ambition to contribute towards the *history* of conceptual art. To the contrary, that history (together with other critical texts) is what provided the data for the systematisation that I propose here.

structure of the argument

As I mentioned, I propose to define what a work of conceptual art is based on two prerequisite conditions: that it is the literal translation of an idea, and that it shows infrastructural aspects of artistic practice. The structure of the dissertation results directly from the determination of these two conditions. What I propose to do is to discuss each of them first within the scope of conceptual art and then within the scope of the architecture project. This results in a structure with four chapters, according to the following table:



In order to address each of the two conditions which define the "conceptual work", I shall start off by creating the theoretical basis that explains their contours and their implications *keeping within the scope of art*. I shall discuss them in as much detail as I consider necessary for the discourse to acquire autonomy – which, at times, will imply that the discussion exceeds what would be strictly necessary to address projects based on that outlook.

In chapter I-1, the condition that determines that *the work is a literal translation of an idea* is based on Sol LeWitt's assertion according to which the execution of a conceptual work only starts after the definition of "what it is", in other words, is based on the idea, and that it does not add any data to that definition. The fact that LeWitt enunciates this principle as a matter of time – as a specific way of linking the steps of production of the work over time – serves as the motif for the organisation of the chapter. I shall first discuss the process that eventually leads to the idea, then the idea itself and finally the execution of the work. I shall also discuss the characteristics of the work that result from this operative setting, namely in as far as concerns: enunciability (the fact that its constitution can be encompassed by the enunciation that defines "what it is"), its literalness (the fact that the work is literal in relation to the enunciation that defines it) and its condition as a material entity (in view of the fact that the "definition of the work" imposes itself on the "material manifestation of the work"). A similar discussion will be developed in chapter I-2, on the subject of the project.

In chapter II-1, I shall return to art in order to base the second condition that is defining of a conceptual work – *the work shows infrastructural aspects of artistic practice*. The conceptual work is self-reflexive. It produces reflection regarding itself – regarding the (theoretical and operative) concepts that are subjacent to them and on which their practice is based. I shall conduct the discussion towards the consideration of two paradigms of self-reflection: one that seeks an essence that defines "art" (which can be identified as the "autonomy" of art) and another that seeks the conjunctural aspects of artistic practice (which tends to view art as political). Following this approach to the *theme* of self-reflection, I shall examine the works that bring about that self-reflection. I shall argue that it is brought about through a strategy of disillusionment. The work becomes self-reflexive in that it departs from the attributes of quality that are expected to be found in it. I shall also argue that within the specific universe of works of conceptual art, that loss of quality results from the adoption of procedures of merely administrative nature (summary decisions about equally summary procedures for achieving the work), instead of productive procedures (the laborious material achievement of the work). In this sense, the operative paradigm of conceptual art is "doing nothing". I shall end that chapter with a typological approach to "ways of doing nothing". Once again, in chapter II-2, the discussion started within the scope of art will be reiterated – and reviewed – within the thematic scope of the architecture project.

As I stated, it is the attempt to "employ in architecture what is typical to art" that serves as the catalyst for the construction of the argument that I shall introduce about the project. I shall test the applicability of the two conditions that are defining of the *conceptual* in art within the scope of the architecture project. Starting with the various aspects implied in each of those two conditions, I shall (1) confront them generically with the nature of the project (with its functional purpose and with its specific operative vicissitudes) and (2) identify specific projects in which those aspects are to be found. These projects will serve as the "sample" in which the applicability of the conceptual operative system shall be assessed and, perhaps, confirmed. (On some occasions, in addition to the projects, perspectives on project practices built within the scope of *theory* of architecture will also be examined.)

This discussion will lead, on the one hand, to parallels between art and project that are appropriate towards defining the "*artisticness* of the project" which I propose and, on the other hand, to finding the limits of applicability of the operating model of conceptual art derived from the differences between art and project.

Bringing together the conclusions with regard to obtaining and constituting the work (chapter I-2.) and about its self- reflexive mission (chapter II-2.), I shall end the dissertation with a conclusion about the "more conceptual" works of architecture I managed to identify – those whose constitution comes closest to being conveyed by a single idea and, simultaneously, possess a self-reflexive reach that brings them close to constituting speculative definitions of the "architecture project".

theory of architecture and history of architecture

This dissertation lies within the scope of theory of architecture. In it, I propose a perspective for examining architecture projects from an artistic perspective – a perspective which is not limited to a given specific context. Historical data is used in as far as they serve to build the argument – to the extent that they can be related to the *theme* – and not according to criteria of historiographical nature. In fact, I shall refer to projects from very different contexts, ranging from the primordial appropriation of caves as inhabitable locations to 21st Century projects. From a historical point of view, it would be unacceptable to disregard the setting that contextualises each of the phenomena in their political and cultural specificity. I only do so to the extent that I reduce those phenomena to an interpretation focused on the project's operativity.

Despite this freedom in using examples of projects (and also texts) from dissimilar historical contexts, two specific contexts are particularly called upon:

- the age of conceptual art itself (generally understood between 1965 and 1975). I shall make reference to Reyner Banham and the leading figures of the so-called "radical architecture" such as Cedric Price and the collectives Superstudio, Archizoom and Archigram, and also Manfredo Tafuri, Peter Eisenman and Hiromi Fuji.
- the 1990s, when the international scene is marked by the appearance of a generation of young architectures including the duo Lacaton & Vassal, Kazuyo Sejima (alone or in the partnership SANAA), the MVRDV collective and Santiago Cirugeda, among others.

These are two contexts in which architecture had particularly self-reflexive radicalism. From this perspective, it is natural that they should appear in parallel throughout this dissertation. However, I believe that a distinction should be made which, though without reflecting directly on the content of the dissertation, may be relevant in order to understand its context. I refer to the historiographical relationship between conceptual art and the two contexts of architectural production.

Although it is not common, "radical architecture" projects are sometimes related to conceptual art[1]. Curiously, this fact has no relevance in my arguments. Seeing that those relations are established due to reasons that are not consentaneous with the definition of "conceptual art" that I have adopted, they may be of historical interest, but do not contribute towards my arguments. In fact, the arguments that bring that architecture close to conceptual art do not go much further than the fact that the architects are producing dystopian projects – in other words, projects that are manifests and are not meant to be built. They are "conceptual" to the extent that they are merely ideas about architecture, and not projects strictly speaking. It is a perspective different to what I propose here.

[1] Some of them were even included in the exhibition *Information* in 1970 – one of the most important exhibitions that contributed towards instating the category "conceptual art". Kynaston L. McShine (ed.), *Information* (exhibition catalogue), New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1970.

For their turn, the projects of the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st Century are not usually associated to conceptual art. By defending this connection from an *a-historical* perspective in my dissertation, whether it makes sense from a historical perspective remains to be seen. It remains to be seen whether conceptual art is reflected in project practice during the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st Century (what is certain, however, is that this dissertation – itself not very distant from the cultural context of these decades – constitutes a reflection of the characteristics of conceptual art on architecture). However, even though I will not delve further into this subject, I would like to point out another possibility – a possibility based on the cultural connections between the 1960s and the modern day. The 1960s are particularly associated to *information*. The current preponderance of the tertiary sector, the virtualisation of technology or the worldview as a "global village" are phenomena based on possibilities enabled by the development of means for communication and data processing. The 1960s laid the foundations for the post-Fordist society – the model currently in force not just in economic terms but also in (broadly) cultural terms and regarding which there is a growing critical conscience[2].

The etymological origin of the word "modern" is "mode" – "*modus*" in Latin. The term we use to designate this conceptual matrix – the modernist – is related, by definition, to the same particle that is used, for example, in "*modus operandi*". There is no doubt that, to a large extent, the history of modernism is the history of an effort to clarify, *ab initio,* modes of doing. The self-reflexive aspect of modern architecture involves similar clarification processes. It aims at the *ontological* origin of the project through the clarification of its procedures. I believe this work can be included in that same tradition.

[2] See: Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, trans. Isabella Bertoletti, James Cascaito & Andrea Casson, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007, p. 59 [originally published as: *Grammatica della moltitudine. Per una analisi delle forme di vita contemporanee*, Soveria Mannelli: Robbettino Editore, 2001]; Paolo Virno & Michael Hardt (eds.), *Radical Thought in Italy: A potential Politics*, trans. Maurizia Boscagli, Cesare Casarino, Paul Colilli, Ed Emory, Michael Hardt & Michael Turits, Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996; Gal Kirn (ed.), *Post-Fordism and its Discontents*, web-based publisher: Lulu.com, 2011; Pascal Gielen & Paul De Bruyne (eds.), *Being an Artist in Post-Fordist Times*, Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2009.

theme I

The work is the literal translation of an idea.

1 conceptual art

conditions for a work to be conceptual:	
I The work is the literal translation of an idea.	**II** The work reveals infrastructural aspects of artistic practice.

theme I – 1 conceptual art	theme II – 1 conceptual art
theme I – 2 architecture	theme II – 2 architecture

the operativity of conceptual art, according to Sol LeWitt

The New York artist Sol LeWitt was the first to employ the term "Conceptual art" to designate and introduce a new artistic category[3]. This term was used for the first time in the manifest "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art"[4], published by LeWitt in the summer of 1967 in the American magazine *Artforum*.

LeWitt was not the first to associate a determined artistic practice to the realm of "concepts". In fact, the art scholar and philosopher Peter Osborne mentions artists and critics who preceded LeWitt[5]: in a text written in 1961 and published in 1963[6], Henry Flynt enunciates a "concept art"[7]; in 1963, Edward Kienholz begins a series of works titled "Concept Tableaux"; in 1965, when referring to the work of Carl Andre, Lucy Lippard employed the term "conceptual extremism" to characterise one of the artistic trends of the time; and, during that same year, Barbara Rose refers to the works of Kenneth Noland and Ellsworth Kelly as "conceptual paintings". Some of the events that led to the creation of these terms may have preceded conceptual art but, even so, LeWitt's manifest is considered to have pioneered the category. There we find, on the one hand, the first reference to "conceptual art" and, on the other, the definition of an operating model for that category – an operating model based on the autonomy of the "idea" behind a work of art in relation to its realisation[8]. LeWitt wrote:

> In conceptual art, the idea of concept is the most important aspect of the work [note 1: In other forms of art the concept may be changed in the process of execution]. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes the machine that makes the art. (...) the artist [selects] the basic form and rules that would govern the solution of the problem. After that the fewer decisions made in

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[3] see: Peter Osborne, "Survey", in Peter Osborne (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, London: Phaidon, 2002, p. 25; Peter Osborne, "Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy", in Michael Newman, Jon Bird (eds.), *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, London: Reaktion Books, 1999, p. 52.

[4] Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art", in Alexander Alberro & Blake Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press, 1999, pp. 12-16 [originally published in *Artforum* 5:10 (Summer 1967), pp. 79-84; also republished in Charles Harrison, Paul Wood (eds.), *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, pp. 834-837; Osborne (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, pp. 213-215].

[5] Osborne, "Survey", p. 25. See also notes 1 and 55.

[6] Osborne explains that, according to George Maciunas, Flynt's idea in fact dates back to 1954.

[7] Lucy Lippard and Charles Harrison also mention the invention of this term by Henry Flynt but, similarly to Osborne, they do not attribute the nature of directly preceding conceptual art. On the contrary, Robert C. Morgan states that "(...) what seems true about Flynt's role in American Conceptualism is that he defined it, perhaps even before his practice of it had fully evolved]". Benjamin H.D. Buchloh also attributes this role to Flynt, viewing the terms "Concept art" and "Conceptual art" as equivalent. Lucy Lippard, *Six Years...*, London: Studio Vista, 1973, p. 258; Robert C. Morgan, *Art into Ideas*, Cambridge (Mass.): Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 32; Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "From the Aesthetics of Administration to Institutional Critique (Some Aspects of Conceptual Art 1962-1969)", in Claude GINTZ, Juliette LAFFON & Angeline SCHERF (eds.), *L'Art Conceptuel, une Perspective* (exhibition catalogue), Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1989, p. 41. [I chose to use the English version of this work because the author is American, but the first version of the text was published simultaneously in French (it is the catalogue of an exhibition that took place at the *Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris*). The text was later revised and published in 1997 in the anthology AAVV, *October: The Second Decade, 1986-1996*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 1997, pp. 117-178.]

[8] The same author – Peter Osborne – specifies that, in as far as concerns LeWitt, " (...) his psychological realism forbids the strictly Conceptual reading of "art as idea" which "Paragraphs" (...) evokes. It is thus not surprising that LeWitt would soon be challenged by a more exclusive, more formally philosophical, type of Conceptualism laying claim to the idea of "art as idea" as its own." This aspect of LeWitt's standpoint is related, however, to the exclusiveness or inclusiveness of the self-reflexive nature of the work of art (the theme of chapter II - 1 of this dissertation) and not the manner in which the conception and production of the work correlate to each other. To this extent, I do not believe that any reservations are necessary as to the validity of the model proposed by LeWitt, in the acceptation I propose as the starting point to this chapter. Osborne, "Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy", p. 54.

> the course of completing the work, the better. This eliminates the arbitrary, the capricious and the subjective as much as possible.[9]

LeWitt thus defined two operative assumptions for what he designates as "conceptual art".

The first relates to the sequence of procedures followed in the production of an artwork. LeWitt rejects the methodological commonplace according to which the work gains definition as it goes along, in other words, the definition and realisation of the work are partially or entirely concurrent processes[10]. Alternatively, he defends a model based on a complete separation between the stage in which the work is idealised (which culminates in the "definition of what the work is") and a stage in which the work is realised (where the "definition of what the work is" is the reference). The execution can only take place after the idealisation has been concluded.

The second assumption derives from the first and relates specifically to the field of authorship. According to the operating model proposed by LeWitt, the artist exercises his function of authorship only during the idealisation stage, culminating in the "definition of what the work is". The next stage, the realisation of the work, is "perfunctory" – the word used by LeWitt to state that it is performed without acquiring any relevance from a creative perspective or in terms of the significance of the work. This avoids "the arbitrary, the capricious and the subjective", features that LeWitt identifies with the manual exercise that the artist performs in order to produce his work. LeWitt is not only referring to impressionist or expressionist work, in which the marks of emotive gestures are valued[11]. It also relates to virtuosity in general and a more orthodox virtuosity in particular, where perfection is the paradigm. From a conceptual perspective, all of that is expressionist: any authorial tendency in the execution of a work is sufficient for that work to be considered expressionist.

When promoting this separation between idealisation and execution, mediated by an entity that defines what the work is, a *modus operandi* is applied that is not traditionally associated to the visual arts, though common in music and typical in architecture since the Renaissance. Someone invents something; the invention culminates in the definition of what the work is; someone executes it. This is the mechanism that permits a concert to be performed by a musician or a group of musicians based on a musical score, and that allows a building to be built from a set of drawings and descriptive documents. In accordance with the nomenclature proposed by the philosopher Nelson Goodman, visual arts thus change from "autographic" (the author himself executes the work) to "allographic" (the work is executed by other agents)[12].

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[9] LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art", p 12.
[10] The operating model proposed by LeWitt contrasts with the definition of art given by R.G. Collingwood, for whom the essence of art resides in expression. See: R.G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938.
[11] It should be noted that LeWitt works within an artistic context in which abstract expressionism (a category that includes the work of Jackson Pollock) is remarkably prominent.
[12] Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968.

This is not exactly a novelty in the world of art. In 1925, Lazlo Moholy-Nagy, known for ordering the execution of a sculpture he authored by phone[13], wrote:

> In fact, in comparison with the creative mental process of the genesis of the work, the question of its execution is important only in as far as it must be *mastered*. The manner, however – whether personal or by assignment of labour, whether manual or mechanical – is irrelevant.[14]

During the 1960s, for minimalists – who definitively incorporate the technological resources offered by industry into the scope of artistic production – ordering the execution of their works from professionals who were not involved in art, particularly metalsmiths, became a common procedure. But LeWitt's manifest should not be viewed as the reflection of industrialisation and its technical revolutions on the world of art. In as far as concerns social phenomena, conceptual art should instead be associated to the universe of intangible work and information, but this is a theme that shall be investigated further ahead, in chapter II-1. For the time being, one need only take into account that LeWitt does not treat the procedures of production of the work as a merely technical issue (as does Moholy-Nagy). Instead, he considers the separation between idealisation and realisation of the work an indispensable requirement for the performance of a certain type of art. In fact, he views that separation as a necessary condition (although insufficient in itself) for a certain artistic practice to be included in a new category – conceptual art. *An operating model is used in order to define an artistic category*. It is with this assumption in mind that I dedicate this first chapter to the operating model proposed by LeWitt and to the discussion of its consequences – the thematic unit summarised in the statement that, in the context of conceptual art, *the work is the literal translation of an idea*.

According to LeWitt, artistic practice is therefore organised into three stages or, more specifically, into two stages separated by an entity. These are (successively): (1) the idealisation of the work; (2) the idea that defines what the work is; (3) the realisation of the work. The theme of this chapter consists in these "two stages separated by an entity", which shall be treated sequentially in the order that they occur.

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[13] Moholy-Nagy wrote: "In 1922 I ordered by telephone from a sign factory five paintings in porcelain enamel. I had the factory's color chart before me and I sketched my paintings on graph paper. At the other end of the telephone the factory supervisor had the same kind of paper, divided into squares. He took down the dictated shapes in the correct position." quoted in Camiel van Winkel, "The obsession with Pure Idea", in Suzanna HÉMAN, Jurrie POOT & Hripsimé VISSER, *Conceptual Art in the Netherlands and Belgium 1965 – 1975: Artists, Collectors, Galleries, Documents, Exhibitions, Events*, Amsterdam: Stederlijk Museum / Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2002, p. 29-30. [originally in: László Moholy-Nagy, *The New Vision*, Wittenborn, New York, 1947, p. 79]

[14] László Moholy-Nagy, "Domestic Pinacotheca", in *Painting, Photography, Film*, transl. Janet Seligmann, Cambridge (Mass): The MIT Press, 1969, p. 26. [originally published in *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*, Munchen: Albert Langen Verlag, 1925].

1. idealisation, or *process*

As I have just mentioned, for LeWitt, it is only during the idealisation stage of the work that *authorship* is performed by the artist. In as far as concerns the various different conceptual artists, there probably isn't much more to add about this "stage of idealisation of the work" other than it being the time during which they idealise what the work is. I refer to those whose intuition leads them to the idea without it being possible to unravel the mental workings in that process through logic. This in no way means that they should not be considered conceptual artists, but, for a number of other conceptual artists, the process of idealisation of the work can be characterised by considerable objectivity, but can also acquire importance to the point that the process becomes the actual theme of the work itself. These are the artists that will be examined in this subchapter. My proposal is to attempt to clarify the specificity that the term "process" acquires in the conceptual context. In doing so, I will argue that the separation between "means" and "ends" does not relate only to the autonomy of the idea in relation to the realisation of the work but, instead, it also characterises other aspects of the process. As shall be seen, this separation becomes particularly radical in a very specific type of conceptual activity – which overlaps with serialism. Finally, the manner in which the process is communicated through the work shall be examined.

With regard to the process, LeWitt wrote in "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art":

> If the artist carries through his idea and makes it into visible form, then all the steps in the process are of importance. The idea itself, even if not made visual, is as much a work of art as any finished product. All intervening steps – scribbles, sketches, drawings, failed work, models, studies, thought, conversations – are of interest. Those that show the thought process of the artist are sometimes more interesting than the final product.[15]

This excerpt is ambiguous. LeWitt starts off by imposing that the work reaches the stage of "visible form" as a necessary condition for the evidence of the process of idealisation of the work to be given relevance. If there is no work (*work* understood as *form*), the process is of no "importance". The relevance of the evidence is, therefore, subordinated to obtaining a form. Then, LeWitt gives autonomy to the idea (in the other words, to the definition of what the work is), awarding it the same importance as the work as a "finished product". Lastly, he raises the possibility that the process is of greater interest than the work – which suggests the work is subordinate to the process. However, despite the contradictions found in the text, what should be considered here is that, in it, the *process* is identified with the cogitation carried out by the artist in order to define "what the work is".

[15] LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art", p. 14.

In this sense, the idea of process as enunciated by LeWitt can be contrasted to the idea that is inherent to the "Process art" category, also established within the historical context of conceptual art[16]. Within the scope of process art, the term "process" refers to the manipulation of the material elements of the work. The work of process art acts as a record of the *execution* procedures that brought it about – procedures that, together, are designated as "process". Raw materials (themselves with an eloquent material expression) are often used and simple procedures are applied so that observation of the work allows the re-enactment of the actions that led to its current appearance. The work amounts to an "index" – a concept defined in linguistics by Charles Sanders Peirce at the turn of the 19th Century[17], and taken as a reference in the context of art by Rosalind Krauss in her renowned 1977 essay "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America"[18]. In summary, an index is a mark left on a certain material as the result of a certain action and which is evidence of that action. Some examples of indices are footprints, fingerprints, bullet holes, writing (as in calligraphy or typography), or photoprint. Other clear examples of indices are the marks revealed by pieces of process art.

In a work of process art, *the realisation of the work* and *the content of the work* therefore coincide. In this way, there is a tendency, as Hal Foster puts it:

> [(...) to overcome the traditional oppositions of form and content (...) and of means and ends (...) – to reveal the process of the work in the product, indeed *as* the product.[19]

Conversely, in the conceptual operating model proposed by LeWitt, the process of idealisation of the work is immune to the contingencies of materiality, viewed merely as a question of "means" – something Peter Osborne designated "(...) instrumental separation of means and ends"[20]. In short:

- In process art, the process is the area where idealisation and realisation overlap.
- In conceptual art (according to LeWitt), process is the area where idealisation occurs, entirely independent from realisation.

As stated by Osborne, the *instrumental separation between means and ends* relates to the fact that the materialization of the work (understood as *means*) is independent of the idealisation of its contents (understood as *end*). This separation takes place at the level of production of the work. But, in as far as specifically concerns the conceptual works based on process, I believe that this separation between means

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[16] With regard to process art see: Cornelia Butler, *Afterimage: Drawing through Process*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 1999.
[17] See: Charles Sanders Peirce, *Semiótica*, transl. Teixeira Coelho, São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1977.
[18] Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index Part I" and "Notes on the Index Part II", in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, 12th edition, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 1999, pp. 196-220 [originally published in *October*, 3 and 4 (Spring and Fall 1977)].
[19] AAVV, *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2004, p. 535.
[20] Osborne, "Survey", p. 25.

and ends also occurs at two other levels: the idealisation of the work and the production of the meaning of the work. This is what I shall try and demonstrate next.

LeWitt states that "those [steps] that show the thought process of the artist are sometimes more interesting than the final product". In fact, within the context of conceptual art, the work's preparatory materials are often displayed to the public. However, it should be noted that these materials are not the same as the studies that, traditionally, precede painting or sculpture but are kept in the atelier. In painting and sculpture, the "sketches" provide a direct approach to the form of the final work, and the preparatory process evolves through successive changes from a form (which is not considered satisfactory at that point) to another form (which is tried out as a better option). In the context of conceptual art, this process corresponds to the pursuit of an idea as opposed to a form.

This does not mean that no conceptual artists ever resort to drawings and, even, the type of drawings that represent forms. Much to the contrary, drawings are to be found in the production of several conceptual artists. Taking for example the exhibition organised in 1996 by Mel Bochner, called *Working drawings and other visible things on paper not necessarily meant to be viewed as art*[21] [104 . 105]. Bochner starts off by asking a group of artists, as well as a number of researchers from different fields of science, to provide graphic materials they produced during their respective work processes: graphic records, notes and documents of several different types. Subsequently, four photocopies were taken of those materials and compiled in alphabetical order according to author in four equivalent dossiers. At the end of each dossier, Bochner added the assembly diagram of the photocopying machine he used – an element that makes the copying method of the graphic material explicit and, to that extent, bears witness to the process of assembly of the exhibition itself (the "process to deal with the processes"). The four dossiers are made available to the public in a room, placed individually on a white plinth – the device traditionally used to exhibit sculptures and also used by Duchamp in order to raise some of his readymades to the status of work of art.

Bochner's exhibition is in line with the LeWitt manifest "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" (published a few months later). Like LeWitt, Bochner claims the importance of the idealisation processes that are personal to each artist as opposed to the supremacy of the finished work – this is the main significance of the exhibition. On the other hand, the separation between idealisation and realisation of the work defended by LeWitt is not only generally associated to the prevalence of the process but is also made explicit through the contribution of Donald Judd: an invoice sent to the artist by the metallurgy company responsible for making many of his sculptures, with the staggering price of $3051.16. However, in addition to the aspects already mentioned, the *Working Drawings...* exhibition provides quite elucidative information in as far as

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[21] Osborne considers that this exhibition "marked the inauguration of process-based conceptual art in the New York art world". Authors such as Benjamin H. D. Buchloh or Tony Godfrey go even further and consider that it was the first conceptual exhibition – not only *of* concept art, but conceptual in itself. Osborne, "Survey", p. 25; Buchloh, "From the Aesthetics of Administration to Institutional Critique", p. 42; Tony Godfrey, *Conceptual Art* (5th edition), London: Phaidon, 2003, p. 116. With regard to this exhibition see also: James Meyer, "The Second Degree: *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to Be Viewed as Art*", in Michael Corris (ed.), *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth, and Practice*, Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 108-122.

specifically concerns the use of drawing. Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler wrote, in the famous text "The Dematerialization of Art", in 1968:

> The interest in rough working drawings, which has become something of a fetish among Primary Structuralists[22], is indicative of a sneaking nostalgia for a certain executionary éclat denied them in the work itself. On the other hand, Bochner's working drawing show at the School of Visual Arts last year, consisting of five[23] identical loose-leaf notebooks filled with Xerox copies of the 'exhibits' (including lists, notes, specifications for bills from fabricators, contributions by poets and architects) brought up another point: the concept of drawing as pseudo-painting was banished and drawing was brought back to its original function as a sketch or medium for working out ideas – visual or intuitive.[24]

Therefore, it is the example of this drawing which "was brought back to its original function as a sketch or medium for working out ideas" that Bochner adds to the assembly diagram of the photocopying machine. This diagram can be taken as an index in order to understand the use of drawings in the process of idealisation of conceptual works and, in that perspective, can be viewed in two ways:

- If viewed as a differentiated element from the remaining graphic material, added merely in order to include the use of photocopies, the assembly diagram reveals that, considering the purpose of the exhibition, it is indifferent whether an original version or a copy of the drawings is seen. When the text of a book is photocopied, a functional relevance is given that does not only depend on the material quality of the book as an object. In the same way, the content and efficacy of the drawings is not altered by their reproduction. The annulment of the traditional aura of a work of art shall be dealt with later, in the subchapter "the work as a *literal translation*". The fact that the components of the work, specifically graphic components, may play a strictly informative role shall be addressed in the subchapter "the work as an entity**"**.
- If viewed in itself as "just another drawing", then a drawing that is as simple and pragmatic as the assembly diagram of a machine is being equated to drawings from idealisation processes performed by artists. It becomes clear that all those other drawings are primarily of technical nature.

In either case, this is a question of understanding drawing as a tool, as a functional resource. Drawing is used as a tool for a task that does not aim at *the shape that the work will be given;* rather, it aims for *the idea of the work*. Even if it represents the form of the work, the drawing is at the service of the abstract logic that governs the form and not its shape. The drawing corresponds to that which is abstract: it is

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[22] This expression designates the artists whose work was included in the exhibition *Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculpture* (organised by Kynaston McShine and shown at the *Jewish Museum*, in New York, between the 27th April and the 12th June 1966) – including Donald Judd, Robert Morris, Carl Andre, Anthony Caro, Walter De Maria, Dan Flavin, Robert Grosvenor, Ellsworth Kelly, Sol LeWitt, Tim Scott, Tony Smith, Robert Smithson, Anne Truitt and William Tucker. "*Primary Structurists*" is a classification that preceded the later hegemonic classification "minimalists". See: Kynaston McShine (ed.), *Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculpture* (exhibition catalogue), New York: The Jewish Museum, 1966.

[23] Out of the references consulted, this is the only article where five dossiers are mentioned as opposed to usual four.

[24] Lucy R. Lippard & John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art", in Osborne (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, p. 219. [originally published in *Art International* 12:2, February 1968. The most often mentioned republication of this article (although a highly abridged version) is to be found in: Alberro and Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art,* pp. 46-50.]

diagrammatic. *Drawing* is as an operative resource, while *shaping* regards the formal rhetoric of the object, irrelevant from the perspective of conceptual art. In order to claim this type of "functionalist" operativity, Bochner also exhibits *other visible things on paper* that, as the title explains, [are] *paper not necessarily meant to be viewed as art*.

In addition to these more general aspects, the materials of the exhibition *Working Drawings...* served for Bochner to illustrate a quite particular understanding of process: based on procedures determined in an objective manner or, at most, those intrinsic to serialism[25]. This objective was largely what drove Bochner to select the group of people he contacted and to include in that group not only visual artists but also musicians (Karlheinz Stockhausen, John Cage), a choreographer (Tom Clancy) and architects (James Ingo Freed), as well as researchers in the fields of mathematics (Arthur Babakhanian), biology (M. Carsiodes) or engineering (the company Tibbetts-Abbett-McCarthy-Stratton).

Bochner and LeWitt also tend to converge *generically* in their interest in seriality. Between 1966 and 1967, it was they who were mainly responsible for the institutionalisation, in New York, of a serialist current within the context of conceptual art[26]. In the text "The Serial Attitude" which he published in 1967[27], Bochner clarified the principles governing seriality in art:

> The serial attitude is a concern with how order of a specific type is manifest. Many artists work in "series". That is, they make different versions of a basic theme; Morandi's bottles or de Kooning's women, for example. This falls outside the area of concern here. Three basic operative assumptions separate serially ordered works from multiple variants:
>
> 1 – The derivation of the terms or interior divisions of the work is by means of a numerical or otherwise systematically predetermined process (permutation, progression, rotation, reversal).
>
> 2 – The order takes precedence over the execution.
>
> 3 – The completed work is fundamentally parsimonious and systematically self-exhausting.[28]

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[25] Sandra Kaji-O'Grady summarises the history of "serial attitudes" in this way: "Serial techniques of composition were first explored in music by Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern in the 1920s and later by Stockhausen, Nancarrow, Wuorinen, and, most famously, Messiaen's pupil Pierre Boulez in the 1950s. Serial methods were subsequently adopted in the visual arts in the late 1960s and developed as a curational theme in exhibitions such as *Art in Series* (1967), *Serial Imagery* (1968), and *Systemic Painting* (1966).]" Sandra Kaji-O'Grady, "Serial Techniques in the Arts: General Ambitions and Particular Manifestations", in Andrew Leach & John MacArthur (eds.), *Architecture, Disciplinarity, and the Arts*, Ghent: A&S/books, 2009, p. 123-124.

[26] In his book *Art into Ideas*, Morgan defines three "methods employed by Conceptualists that deal (...) implicitly with the underlying concept or procedure from which the appearance of the work emanates". One of those methods is designated by Morgan as "systemic". This includes works by "a number of artists [that] became involved in the use of systems and seriation as an anti-Formalist method and as a mean to get beyond the constraints of expressive ordering". This is a more comprehensive typology than that proposed here. As was previously announced, Morgan's systemic method includes works that have nothing to do with series (Vito Acconci, Dan Graham, Hans Haacke). But even in as far as concerns series, both works where the systems are a means of excluding the subjectivity of the logic generating the form (LeWitt, Bochner as a serialist), and works where the systems are connected to the experience of the passing of time (On Kawara, Hanne Darboven) are included in the systemic method. In the latter, it is the contrast between the subjective experience registered and the systematic process of registration – unusually objective – that situates the work within the scope of conceptual operativity. A similar opinion is held by Anne Rorimer in the chapter "Systems, Seriality, Sequence" of the book *New Art in the 60s and 70s: Redefining Reality*. Morgan, *Art into Ideas*, p 15 and p. 23; Anne Rorimer, *New Art in the 60s and 70s: Redefining Reality*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2001.

[27] Regarding the connection between the exhibition and this text, both undertakings by Bochner, James Meyer states: The *Working Drawings* revealed how artists were employing the different schema described in "The Serial Attitude". James Meyer, "The Second Degree", p. 114.

[28] Mel Bochner, "The Serial Attitude", in Alberro & Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art*, p. 22-23 [originally published in: *Artforum*, 6:4

The qualifier "serial" originates from the mathematical definition of *series*: a sequence of terms that is obtained by the systematic and differentiated application of a certain rule (the variations) and with a limited number of terms (in other words, to a certain extent, continuing a series means starting to make a repetition). It is the fact that a series has a finite number of terms that gives it specificity in the general scope of *sequences* that can be developed indefinitely. Bearing this definition in mind, it is clear that Bochner's *serial attitude* results from the conjugation of two aspects:

- the mathematical definition of series, which determines point 1 and the work's self-exhausting nature referred to in point 3;
- the prevalence of the idea of the work over its execution, which has been addressed here, and determines point 2 and the parsimony referred to in point 3.

In this operating model, the serial logic that the artists adopt works as a device that generates the form of the work. Bochner departs from the types of series where variations are determined subjectively (such as those of Morandi or de Kooning) and, instead, defends resorting to rules that determine the generation of form by themselves, through their mathematical certainty. The artist – author – waives their absolute control over the definition of the work's form, leaving this definition to the organisational logic of the series[29]. He determines only the system that, in turn, determines the form. Authorship, in its inalienable subjectivity, is therefore dislocated from the scope of determination of the form to the scope of determination of the system that generates the form. This displacement means that, besides the de-subjectification of the execution of the work that has already been mentioned, there is also a de-subjectification of the formal genesis of the work. *It is not only the execution of the work that is perfunctory; so it the process of generation of its form*. There is a separation between the configuration of the work (means) and the abstract logic that actually determines it (end).

In this way, another possibility – LeWitt's statement that "the plan would design the work"[30] – is added to LeWitt's aphorism that "the idea becomes the machine that produces the art". To put it differently, in addition to the idea of creating a machine that governs the realisation of the work in a self- sufficient manner, the idea may also constitute the machine that regulates the generation of the form of the work in a self-sufficient manner, through a *process*. "Process" is therefore a term that can be given two distinct meanings in the context of conceptual art:

- It may refer to the *process of idealisation of the work* (which is not exclusive to conceptual art). Any work of art, even if it explores automatic procedures or expressive spontaneity, results from a process

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(December 1967), pp. 28-33].

[29] In the scope of music, Steve Reich carries out a work that starts out from similar assumptions. He wrote, in 1968: "I am interested in perceptible processes. I want to be able to hear the process happening throughout the sounding music (...) Though I may have the pleasure of discovering musical processes and composing the musical material to run through them, once the process is set up and loaded it runs by itself." Steve Reich, "Music as a Gradual Process", cited in Rorimer, *New Art in the 60s and* 70s, p. 160 [published in *Writings about Music*, Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1974].

[30] LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art", p. 13.

of idealisation, that is, from a time before its realisation during which the author imagines or plans the performance of the procedures which will bring it about;

- It may also refer to the *process of generation of the form of the work* through a criterion that is defined as a result of the idealisation process (a typically conceptual operative possibility). In this case, the idealisation process does not lead to the definition or imagination of the form of the work, but rather the definition of a mechanism that determines the form of the work. In this case, "process" designates the set of logical-deductive phenomena which, started by the artist, autonomously generate the definition of what the work will be. This process is a specific result of the process of idealisation referred to in the previous item. As was mentioned, instead of idealising the form of the work, it is the mechanism that will define the form of the work that is idealised. This process, therefore, operates as a mediator between the artist's subjectivity and the form of the work.

Conceptual works: idealisation process → form of the work

Serial works: idealisation process → process generating the form of the work → form of the work

In fact, serial works are not always strictly limited to the use of series, and often involve producing sequences to which limits are applied. But this fact is not relevant. Whether the limit of the sequence is set by the completion of all possible variations, or set by the artist, the process of generation of the form is developed deductively, in other words, in an absolutely rational manner. Naturally, neither LeWitt or Bochner, nor any other artist who produces serial works would intend to institute such a thing as "rational art". Instead, the rationalisation of the generative process of the form of the work is merely a stratagem[31]. Decoding the form of the work – which traditionally permits access to its contents – only leads to understanding the deductive logic that governs that form. And that is not where the content of the work resides. The meaning of the work is beyond the understanding of the form presented. Decoding the form of the work leads to a "dead end" of meaning, to the extent that it only permits access to the mathematical or radically objective logical basis. Since the expression of mathematical principles is not art in itself, one reaches the point where it no longer makes sense to ask "what does the form mean?" and it is necessary to discover the meaning of the work from observing the situation which the work led to, in other words, asking "what does making this form mean?" Therefore, what serves as a fundamental means of accessing the significance of the work is not the form, but the logical decipherment of that form. This is how the full "instrumental separation of means and ends" is established: the level at which not only the form but the very logic generating the form is merely a *means*.

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[31] Regarding the connection between objectivity and intuition within the scope of conceptual art, see: Adrian Piper, "1. A Defense of the 'Conceptual' Process in Art", in *Out of Order, Out of Sight: Volume II: Selected Writings in Art Criticism 1967-1992*, Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press, 1996, p. 3-4.

Although I have only referred to deductive processes, the same can be said about processes that are purely random. In these also, what can be taken from decoding the form of the work – in this case, the *impossibility* of decoding – corresponding simply to a stalemate in meaning, results from the automatic application of a generative process. Only by starting from that stalemate is it possible to access the meaning of the work.

Based on all the considerations made here with regard to the importance that process may acquire in the context of conceptual art, it is possible to conclude that the "instrumental separation between means and ends" can occur at three distinct levels – the first common to all conceptual works and the others occurring exclusively in works of procedural origin. With regard to generic production, there is a separation between the realisation of the work (means) and the "definition of what the work is" (end). With regard to idealisation of the work, there is a separation between the configuration of the work (means) and the abstract logic which, in fact, determines that configuration (end). With regard to production of meaning of the work, there is a separation between the abstract logic which determined the form (means) and the meaning of the work implied by it (end). These three possibilities can be organised according to the following table:

	means	**ends**
Level of production of the work	Realisation of the work, reduced to a merely perfunctory task	Definition of what the work is, immune to traditional subjectivities in realisation
Level of idealisation of the work	Form of the work, resulting from the perfunctory performance of generative logic	Generative logic of the form of the work, immune to the traditional subjectivities in definition of the form
Level of production of the meaning of the work	Logic of the form of the work, decipherable in its total objectivity (or absence of logic in the form of the work, which cannot be deciphered because it is random)	Meaning of the work, resulting from the dissatisfaction produced by total objectiveness (or randomness) of the logic of the form of the work

The third possibility, to the extent that it implies the role that *decoding the logic of the process* plays in accessing the meaning of the work, introduces the theme that shall be treated briefly in order to close this subchapter: the way in which the work communicates the process that generated it.

When LeWitt states that "those [steps] that show the thought process of the artist are sometimes more interesting than the final product", he is still not taking the adoption of a process to its ultimate conclusion: it is the work itself, or the final product, which reveals the process. To be more precise, the work is simply the communication of the process. This is a characteristic of serial works. (It is, in fact, a characteristic that distinguishes them from minimalist works, their predecessors, where serial principles are used *only* as a de-subjectified compositional strategy to configure forms that are valid in their own right.) In order to comply with the function of communicating the generative process that brought it about, the serial

work has specific formal features.

As mentioned earlier, serial works result from a *successive* deduction of a set of terms. The elements of a serial work are obtained consecutively, one after the other, over time. But, in contrast to what frequently happens in music, serial works that realise series, such as those of LeWitt and Bochner, exist in a single moment in time. Regarding this, LeWitt writes:

> The series would be read by the viewer in a linear or narrative manner even though in its final form many of these sets would be operating simultaneously, making comprehension difficult. [32]

The work provides the viewer, in a single go, with the result of a game that was performed in stages. On the one hand, the work possesses a synchronic nature (because it provides all the information at once, simultaneously). On the other hand, its logic is diachronic (because the terms that constitute it occur successively over time). It is, therefore, only natural that both LeWitt and Bochner should be interested in the work of the photographer Eadweard Muybridge and, more specifically, in his series of photographs regarding locomotion of people and animals[33] [99]. In these, movement is shown through the juxtaposition of the registration of the successive positions that the body assumes during the successive instants until the body returns to the first position registered. Time in the generative process of the serial works referred here is less specific than the time of the locomotion (the duration of taking one step can be measured), but the connection between *diachronic process* and *synchronic presentation* is similar.

As Robert C. Morgan notes, "with Muybridge begins the rebirth of imagery as a language system to be "read""[34]. The photographs of Muybridge are in fact laid out with the words from a sentence, and it is this possibility that the images acquire a discoursive function, to the point of dispensing with their representative function, that attracts conceptual artists.

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[32] Sol LeWitt, "Serial Project No. 1 (ABCD)", in Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art*, p. 211 [originally published in: *Aspen Magazine*, 5-6 (1966)].

[33] Note the example of Eadweard Muybridge for the meaning acquired as a reference for seriality in conceptual art, though the examples of Etienne-Jules Marey and Thomas Eakins could also be mentioned.

[34] Robert C. Morgan, *Conceptual Art: An American Perspective*, Jefferson/London: McFarland, 1994, p. 75.

2. idea

Neither the possibility of raising the process itself to the status of artwork, nor even the adoption of processual generative systems can be considered general attributes of the "conceptual art" category. Lawrence Weiner, for example, in an interview with Arthur R. Rose[35], stated peremptorily "I'm not interested in the process"[36]. In turn, Joseph Kosuth wrote: "How things were made was once important. The final object is now important."[37]. From an operative perspective, what characterised conceptual art is the existence of an idea that defines what the work is, rendering its realisation a merely perfunctory task.

Given that the conceptual operating model is based on the "idea", one asks: after all, what is an idea, exactly? This subchapter is dedicated to providing an answer to this question. For this purpose, I have planned two main lines of argument: one serving to clarify the autonomy that the idea acquires in this specific context (and which also involves the definitions of "enunciation", "enunciability" and "concept"); the other aiming to clarify the content of conceptual ideas, in other words, what it is that they truly define[38]. In order to introduce these themes, I shall revisit to the manifests of LeWitt, more specifically, "Sentences on Conceptual Art"[39] – another important text in the definition of conceptual art, published in May 1969, in the first number of *Art-Language: The Journal of Conceptual Art*. In the ninth and tenth points of a set of 35 points LeWitt wrote:

> 9. The concept and idea are different. The former implies a general direction while the latter are components. Ideas implement the concept.
> 10. Ideas alone can be works of art; they are in a chain of development that may eventually find some form. All ideas need not be made physical.[40]

For the time being, I shall not question the definition of "concept". That will be addressed later. First of all, the "idea". Considering these two points together, an artwork cannot be realised (remaining no more than simply an idea) but that, in order to exist, it has to be defined by its components (in other words, it has to be established as the "idea"). "Definition of what the work is" and "definition of the components of the work" should therefore be considered equivalent. However, the nature of what is understood by components is not

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[35] Arthur R. Rose was a pseudonym for Joseph Kosuth allusive to a supposed nephew of Rrose Sélavy, which was also the female pseudonym of Marcel Duchamp. The Lawrence Weiner interview quoted here was republished when, twenty years after their original publication, the four interviews were repeated under the title "The Return of Arthur R. Rose". Weiner limited his response to Robert C. Morgan, mentor of the initiative as: PLEASE REPEAT SAME INTERVIEW STOP SAME QUESTIONS SAME ANSWERS STOP BEST LAWRENCE. Morgan, *Art into Ideas*, pp. 58-60.

[36] Arthur R. Rose, "Four Interviews", in Gregory Battcock (ed.), *Idea Art: A Critical Anthology*, New York: Dutton, 1973, p. 149 [originally published in *Arts Magazine*, 43, nr. 4, February 1969].

[37] Joseph Kosuth, "Notes on Conceptual Art and Models", in *Art after Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966-1990*, Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press, 1991, p. 3 [originally published under the title "Statement" in: *Non-Anthropomorphic Art by Four Young Artists* (exhibition catalogue), New York: Lannis Gallery (Museum of Normal art), 1967].

[38] Regarding the history of the "idea" (prior to the type of "idea" in question here), see: Erwin Panofsky, *Idea: Contribution à l'Histoire du Concept de l'Ancienne Théorie de l'Art*, transl. Henri Joly, Paris: Gallimard, 1989.

[39] LeWitt simply revises the 1968 title "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art", replacing "paragraphs" with "sentences".

[40] Sol LeWitt, "Sentences on Conceptual Art", *Art-Language: The Journal of Conceptual Art*, 1:1 (May 1969), pp. 11].

made clear. In theory, one can conclude from LeWitt's words that, if the idea constitutes the components and if the idea can precede the form, then the components of the idea may be non-formal. But LeWitt's intention may not extend to a work where the components are "non-formal"[41]. It should be noted that, in point 28, LeWitt stated that "Once the idea of the piece is established in the artist's mind and the final form is decided, the process is carried out blindly"[42], associating idea and form and, in this sense, not going as far as claiming the existence of an art with "non-formal components"[43]. All that can be safely surmised is that, in point 10 of "Sentences on Conceptual Art", LeWitt puts forward two possibilities: (1) the idea is autonomous in its capacity as an entity that defines what the work is; (2) the idea remains in a stage of imponderability which *precedes* (or, even, *is independent from*) the establishment of a form. Despite LeWitt addressing them in the same point and seemingly being related, these two possibilities are not equivalent or even interdependent. It is true that both put the material and / or formal status of the work of art into question, however, there is a significant difference between them:

- The autonomy of the idea relates to the position taken up by the idea in conceptual art practices, regardless of whether that idea contemplates, or not, formal or material aspects. (As shall be seen, the idea can even be itself presented to the public, acquiring the status of a work.)
- The denial of an idea that defines something as specifically as a "form" depends on the nature of that which the idea defines, regardless of whether the work remains merely an idea or is realised.

It is this difference that distinguishes the two lines of argument I propose for this subchapter. Firstly, the autonomy of the idea shall be examined.

Although LeWitt refers to the autonomy of the idea in "Sentences on Conceptual Art", it is Lawrence Weiner – another protagonist of New York conceptual art – who instituted the autonomy of the idea as assumption in his artistic work most paradigmatically. According to what Weiner stated, it was after one of his works was accidentally ruined that he became aware of the autonomy that the ideas defining his works possessed[44]. The work in question was an outdoor installation which, in Spring 1968, integrated the exhibition *Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Lawrence Weiner*. It was called A SERIES OF STAKES SET IN THE GROUND AT REGULAR INTERVALS TO FORM A RECTANGLE / TWINE STRUNG FROM STAKE TO STAKE TO DEMARK A GRID / A RECTANGLE REMOVED

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[41] The work of LeWitt does not confirm this openness to the possibility of "non-formal components", but this fact is not taken into account here because it is assumed that the text regards conceptual art work and not the production of its author alone. The fact that LeWitt stated in "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" that "if the artist implements his idea and turns it into a visible form, then all the steps of the process are important" is also not taken into account – a statement which, as was said above, makes the realisation of the work a necessary condition for any stage preceding the visible work to become important. One does not expect the artist to maintain the assumption he advocates unaltered. In fact, the actual term "components" is not strictly correct. It is used here for practical reasons. The nature of the idea – and, more specifically, the nature of what the idea determines shall be addressed, as was mentioned, further ahead.

[42] LeWitt, "Sentences on Conceptual Art", p. 12, "28. Once the idea of the piece is established in the artist's mind and the final form is decided, the process is carried out blindly. (...)".

[43] On this matter, Osborne writes that "(...) LeWitt is not really thinking ontologically about art's objecthood (...) even if we consider the object intentionalistically, as an idea. Rather, more simply, he is concerned to valorise the intellectual element of the process of its production (...)."Osborne, "Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy", p. 54.

[44] See: Rorimer, *New Art in the 60s and 70s*, p. 77. Liz Kotz refers to this fact as a myth. See: Liz Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 2007, p. 205.

FROM THIS RECTANGLE. This long title was, in fact, the idea of the work. It defines the work through its *components*, to use the term employed by LeWitt. At the end of the same year, taking this autonomy to its logical conclusion, Weiner presents a set of works in writing only. *Statements*[45] is published: an inventory of works, each of which is summarised in a statement and presented in the centre of a page, similarly to the depictions found in a catalogue[46] [117]. Immediately afterwards, Weiner was one of the artists who participated at the exhibition *January 5-31, 1969*[47] (also widely known as the "January Show") and, in the exhibition catalogue, he wrote:

> 1. The artist may construct the piece.
> 2. The piece may be fabricated.
> 3. The piece need not be built.
>
> Each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist, the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership.[48]

This *statement of intent* was repeated by Weiner in different ways and under different circumstances throughout his career as an artist[49]. Both this declaration, and the publication *Statements*, are emblematic in Weiner's work and are essential elements in the history of conceptual art[50]. They have wide-ranging implications in as far as concerns protocols of performance and receivership of art, some of which will be mentioned below, but they are mainly associated to the fact that Weiner was the best-known conceptual artist to take the autonomy of the enunciation of the work to the level of "presentation of the enunciation itself as art". From the age of conceptual art until the present day, Weiner has inscribed enunciations of works on gallery walls, publications, outdoor walls and pavements, etc.

Presenting the public the idea of the work, as opposed to the realisation of the work, is only possible because the work thus enunciated is *enunciable*, i.e. it can be described through words. The autonomy of the idea does not simply result from the will of the artist to make it so. An idea, in order to acquire

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[45] Lawrence Weiner, *Statements*, New York: Seth Siegelaub, 1968.
[46] *Statements*, as a device for presenting works of art that constitutes an alternative to the traditional device of an exhibition.
[47] This designation was a result of turning what usually would simply be information as to when the exhibition would be open to the public into the actual name. Therefore, this is a "readymade" name.
[48] Lawrence Weiner, "Statement of Intent", in Seth Siegelaub (ed.), *January 5-31, 1969* (exhibition catalogue), New York: Seth Siegelaub, 1969. Republished in Lawrence Weiner, *Having Been Said: Writings & Interviews of Lawrence Weiner 1968-2003*, ed. Gerti Fietzek & Gregor Stemmrich, Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2004, p. 21. In 1983, at an exhibition of his works at Kunsthalle Berne, Weiner demonstrated the three possibilities listed in the *statement of intent*: one third of the works were made by the artist: one third was executed by people from that city; one third was presented merely as an enunciation.
[49] See: David Batchelor, "Many Colored Objects Placed Side by Side to Form a Row of many Colored Objects" in AAVV, *Lawrence Weiner*, London: Phaidon, 1998, pp. 74-83.
[50] Weiner did not work alone. The exhibition *Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Lawrence Weiner*, the *Statements* publication, the *January 5-31, 1969* exhibition, as well as many other event with which Weiner was associated between February 1968 and July 1971 were promoted by Seth Siegelaub – the charismatic curator of concept art and predecessor of the creation of models for the presentation or communication of works of art that were adequate to the specificity of those works. In addition to Wiener, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler and Joseph Kosuth were members of the "Siegelaub group". See: Seth Siegelaub, "On Exhibitions and the World at Large", in Battcock (ed.), *Idea Art*, pp. 165-173 [originally published in *Studio International* (December 1969)]; Patricia Norvell, "Seth Siegelaub: April, 17 1969" (interview), in Alexander Alberro & Patricia Norvell (eds.), *Recording Conceptual Art*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2001, pp. 31-55; Alexander Alberro, "The Siegelaub Idea", in *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*, Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press, 2003, pp. 152-170.

autonomy and be enunciated, must have specific features. Regarding this, note how Ian Wilson also points out the circumstances under which he became aware of the autonomy that the idea of a work may acquire. In his words,

> It occurred to me when I looked at a Robert Morris sculpture it would be possible for me to say it, to describe it quite easily. I went away thinking that it was not necessary for me to see that sculpture again, I could just say it – not even say it – but think it. It was so primary, so reduced to one unit.[51]

Wilson, as Weiner before him, mentions that feature which a work of art may have – enunciability. Enunciability presupposes the existence of reciprocity between the idea and the work, according to which: (1) An idea is a set of data capable of *succinctly* defining what the work is without resorting to a description of a complex formal or material object that is autonomous in relation to that set of summary data; (2) the work is characterised because it can be summarised in an idea, in other words, its essential features can be *succinctly* defined and it does not possess an autonomous formal or material complexity associated to those essential features.

This feature – crucial to the present argument – is common to works of conceptual art, and is one of the two characteristics I consider *defining* of these works. The presentation of the materialized work may afford greater visual entertainment than the presentation of its enunciation (material that can occupy the *perception* without need for *cogitation*), but what the work is, that from which the meanings of the work are taken, lies in the enunciation. As the artist Adrian Piper once said, "good ideas are necessary and sufficient for good art"[52] a statement which would be equally valid for conceptual art.

I believe that this dissertation may illustrate this assumption. The images of the works that are mentioned here can be consulted in the corresponding appendix, but are not crucial in order to perceive the defining qualities of those works (not to mention the works whose purpose, as shall be seen later, is to render the creation of any image whatsoever impossible). To disclose the idea that defines them, *in words*, is sufficient. Conceptual works are enunciable because their fundamental characteristics are *not only succinct, but discoursive*.

This would be unlikely to happen with a Rembrandt painting unless, of course, one started with the assumption that the readers were familiar with the work in question. In this case, formal characteristics are essential for the analysis and comprehension of the work: the environment of the place depicted, the expression of any persons portrayed therein, the marks of the execution of the work, the use of colour, etc. This is true even with regard to abstract paintings. A Kandinsky or Mondrian painting cannot be enunciated. It has to be *seen*. (Perhaps some of the paintings of Malevich, enunciated in the title itself similarly to the

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[51] Ian Wilson, "Ian Wilson, November 12, 1969", in Ursula Meyer, *Conceptual Art*, p. 220.
[52] Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, p. 5.

works of Weiner, are closer to conceptual enunciability[53]). Even minimalist works such as those of Robert Morris – which, as Wilson affirms, are enunciable – are not enunciable in the same way as a work of conceptual art. The meaning of minimalist works is produced based on their physical presence and the interaction that the presence creates with the exhibition space and the receiver's own body. They therefore need to be experienced. They are aimed, first and foremost, to be the object of *perception*. To this extent, the fact that they are enunciable merely reflects the simplicity of their morphological characteristics. They are enunciable because their geometry – a purely formal attribute – is elementary and therefore easily described, but the description does not dispense with the existence of form and the sensory experience of that form[54]. Instead, the enunciability of the conceptual work of art arises from the fact that the enunciation is sufficient to trigger the exercise of *cognition* that the work would also trigger (or, at least, that is its paradigm). In minimalism, it is possible to enunciate "the appearance that the work has", in conceptual art one enunciates "what the work *is*".

Enunciability is therefore a characteristic common to all conceptual art. The existence of an idea is subjacent to all of them. However, there is a difference between works from which the idea can be deduced and works that are enunciated by the artist. In order to address this distinction, I propose the following terminology:

Idea is the definition of what the work is (we shall see *what* defines the idea, or *how* it is defined). More specifically, it is the verbal object to which the creation of any conceptual work of art can be reduced. According to this interpretation, "idea" is a synonym for "formula" – the term used by Marcel Duchamp precisely in the expression "ideatic formulation"[55]. The idea *formulates* what the work is. The legitimacy of the deduction of an idea from a work by some individual analysing it is something that may be questioned. If the author of the work does not make the idea explicit, how can anyone be sure as to what that idea is? Indeed, it is not a univocal deduction. The deduction is not made within the scope of a system that in itself guarantees it is univocal, as is the case, for example, in the notational system that Goodman identifies in music scores[56]. When a melody is written down in a score (deducing, from the work, the notational system that defines it), there is an unmistakable difference between a faithful transcription and another that is a deviation. When the idea is deduced

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[53] With regard to the "enunciable" works of Malevich see: Gérard Conio, *Le Constructivisme Russe*, 1st volume, Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1987; Matthew Drutt (ed.), *Kazimir Malevich: Suprematism* (exhibition catalogue), New York: Guggenheim, 2003; Jean-Claude Marcadé, *L'Avant-garde Russe*, Paris: Flammarion, 1995.

[54] In this type of works a very specific type of reduction is produced. With regard to minimalism or, more precisely, the connection between minimalism and the work of Ad Reinhardt, Robert C. Morgan states that, in this reduction, "(...) the phenomenological aspect of art is given its irreducible essence." Morgan, *Art into Ideas*, p. 16.

[55] Marcel Duchamp states: "All my work in the period before the *Nude* was visual painting. Then I came to the idea. I thought the ideatic formulation a way to get away from influences". This extract has been widely quoted. It is part of an interview held with Duchamp, published in 1968 (when conceptual art was in full throttle). Francis Roberts, "I Propose to Strain the Laws of Physics" (interview with Marcel Duchamp), *Art News* 67 (December 1968), p. 62.

[56] See: Goodman, *As Linguagens da Arte*, p. 198-199.

from a work of conceptual art, everything is more subjective. Coincidently, the idea may, in itself, be of notational nature (as occurs, often, in serial works), but it is more common for the idea to possess a discoursive nature. In this sense, a conceptual idea is closer to the model that Goodman designates as "script"[57]. There is yet another factor to consider regarding the legibility of the idea (and in the actual legibility of the existence of an idea): as shall be demonstrated below, an idea becomes clearer to the extent that the form is subordinated to the idea and does not possess attributes that give it value in itself. This subject shall be addressed in the next subchapter.

Enunciation[58] is the verbal entity produced by the artist in order to make the idea of a work explicit (often used as the title of that work). While the idea is a generic attribute of a work of conceptual art, the enunciation only appears in the specific case of works where the artist takes the initiative to make the idea explicit. It can also be said that, from a historiographical perspective, the enunciation of the work is a possibility explored in the suprematist painting of Kazimir Malevich (author of the aphorism "The pen is mightier than the brush") and subjacent to the readymade, used but not made explicit in minimalism, and only reaching its plenitude in the transition from minimalism to conceptual art by the hands of LeWitt, Weiner and their peers. **Statement** is simply the term that Weiner uses to designate the enunciations that he himself produces.

After establishing the meanings of "idea" and "enunciation", it is still necessary to determine what, in the middle of all this, is a *concept*? This seems to be the key word behind understanding what *conceptual* art is. Chapter II-1 is entirely dedicated to that theme, but it shall be examined now, if only briefly, for it is important to clarify: what is the difference between "idea" and "concept"? Apparently, they are closely related terms. However, according to the terminology I propose here, the two terms differ substantially. They are immediately different due to their use outside the realm of conceptual art. As Robert C. Morgan explains,

> From a philosophical point of view a concept is a complex composition of ideas, something that is formulated according to a hypothesis, a sort of proposition that incites a method. An idea, on the other hand, is less complex, more spontaneous.[59]

A concept is in fact something more complex than an idea. A concept must be sufficiently complete and stable as a theoretical definition for it to serve – and this is what defines it – as a reference for the construction of arguments and opinions. In order to state one's opinion about a theatrical performance, for example, one has to base that opinion on *concepts* such as dramaturgy, stage direction, rhythm, acting, etc.

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[57] Ibidem, pp. 217-219.

[58] In a discussion regarding the "aesthetic" importance of Marcel Duchamp's readymade (which, to a large extent, also implies the historical significance of concept art), Thierry de Duve makes reference to the concept of "énoncé" (enunciation) as it is defined and used by Michel Foucault. The use of the term "enunciation" as proposed herein is unrelated to the interpretation proposed by Foucault, that is, it does not invoke a deviation with regard to grammatical and logical discoursiveness. Thierry de Duve, *Kant after Duchamp*, Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press, 2nd edition, 1999, pp. 386-389 [originally published in 1996].

[59] Morgan, *Conceptual Art*, p. 121.

In addition to the emotions this may imply, these serve as the anchor both for the interpretation of the performance and the construction of the discourse about it. In the same context, an idea can be "the show in which the actors do not appear and only the voices can be heard". These concepts are necessary in order to contemplate this idea.

In the specific scope of conceptual art, LeWitt's view is that the concept "implies a general direction" of the work, while ideas "are components". "Ideas implement the concept" he stated.

In as far as concerns the "idea", according to the viewpoint that LeWitt defends, the meaning of the term was limited to the operative entity that defines what the work is. However, in as far as regards the "concept", despite linking it to the "general meaning" of the work, I intend to use it to designate *more than the intention of the work* which LeWitt seems to refer to. If the concept is a theoretical definition that serves as the reference for the construction of arguments and opinions, and if conceptual art seeks, as a self-reflexive practice, to provide a reflection of the pillars of understanding of art, then the theme of pieces of conceptual art are the concepts inherent to art. In this sense, "concept" shall be used as an abbreviation of the "concepts inherent to artistic practice", thus designating the thematic scope implied or addressed by the work. This is the theme of chapter II-1.

"Idea" and "concept" are easily confused for they are both entities that belong to the same abstract universe – a universe accessible through the construction of discourse. Conceptual works are enunciable through verbal language, and the concepts on which these works focus are also enunciable. The two terms are confused to the point where the actual category of conceptual art (or, even, other artistic fields that partially coincide with it) is evoked by several critics or historians using "idea" instead of "concept". This is what happens, for example in the book *Idea Art*[60] – an anthology of texts organised by Gregory Battcock in 1973, at the end of the historical period of conceptual art – or in the book *Art into Ideas*[61] – a retrospective regarding conceptual-based practices, authored by Morgan and published in 1996. Conversely, the ambiguity between "idea" and "concept" is also present in the designation "conceptual art", making it polysemic (and, perhaps, successful for that very reason): if the adjective "conceptual" refers to what is designated here as "idea", it alludes to the enunciability of the works; if it refers to what is designated here as "concept", it alludes to the self-reflexive function of this type of art.

In addition to the discoursive nature of ideas and concepts, the pieces of conceptual art themselves often include, or are composed of verbal components. However, the association of concept with the adoption of words as components or art, despite being repeated by different authors, has no value for the definition of the category "conceptual art". It is true that there were a number of artistic practices, during the history of conceptual art, which have adopted words as their raw material. And those artistic practices can be classified as an autonomous typology. This is what Liz Kotz does in the book she dedicates to "words

[60] Battcock (ed.), *Idea Art*
[61] Morgan, *Art into Ideas*

to be looked at"[62], analysing the use of language in art during the 1960s. But the purpose of Kotz' study admittedly spans instituted categories such as conceptual art. In this dissertation, I take conceptual art not only as a valid category but also as a theme, and to that extent, I consider that resorting to language is not in itself a distinctive factor. At most, it is a symptom of the entry of a typically verbal discoursiveness into the scope of art, contrasting with the traditional supremacy of images. (I shall not start a debate that might oppose, on the one hand, the distinction between "discoursive" and "ostentatious" as defined by Thierry de Duve and, on the other hand, the graphic discoursiveness of Johanna Drucker[63]).

Following this theoretical discussion on the subject of "what is an idea", I now propose to address "what an idea defines". The manner in which the idea defines "what the work is" is not always the same. The nature of its content – that which the idea refers to – varies. In this way, I shall close this subchapter dedicated to the idea with an attempt to outline a typological classification.

Morgan and Kotz both refer to several *types of idea* that can be found within the scope of conceptual practices and, in doing so, both establish a similar, tripartite classification. From Morgan's point of view, a work may result from:

> (...) the idea or reflection concerning how the object or event unfolded over time (Huebler, Barry), how it could be made (Weiner) or how it could be analyzed through language (Kosuth).[64]

Kotz, in turn, states that the realisations of an idea may take "(...) the form of performed act, sculptural objects, or linguistic statement."[65] The first of these types – the event – is the type where the perspectives of the two authors differ the most. While Morgan identifies works that, in general, are developed over time, Kotz restricts the works that are developed over time to those that are have a performance nature, in other words, that are marked by the presence of the body of the artist. Except for that difference, both presuppose that the idea which defines "what the work is" may refer to an ephemeral event, to an object or a language.

In fact, these three types are ambiguous. They are not only the result of considering the *manner in which the idea defines the work*, but also of what the work is. "What the idea is", merely as an idea, is confused with "what the work is as defined by that idea". To consider the idea in itself means considering it as a device that serves to achieve the work and, in this sense, means considering *in what way* it defines what the work is – taking into account what exactly is defined by the idea – what the idea focuses on. Although related, they are different things. The more or less material nature of the entities that constitute

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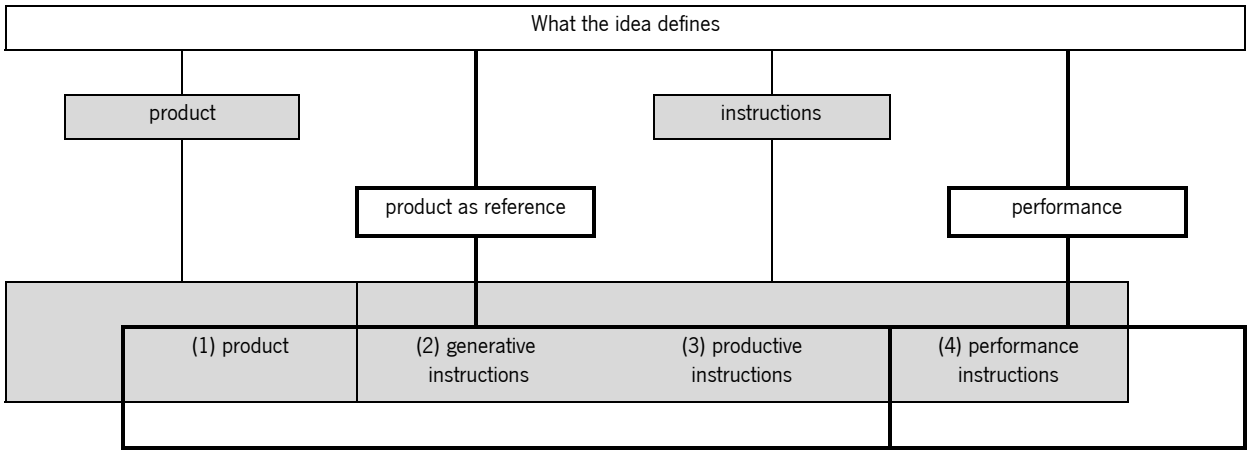
[62] Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At*
[63] See: de Duve, *Kant after Duchamp*,pp. 382-389; Johanna Drucker, "The Crux of Conceptualism: Conceptual Art, the Idea of Idea, and the Information Paradigm", in Corris (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, pp. 251-268.
[64] Morgan, *Art into Ideas*, p. 34.
[65] Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At*, p. 175-176.

conceptual works shall only be looked into further ahead, in the subchapter "the work as an entity". For the time being, the aim is to consider specifically the "manner in which the idea defines what the work is". In this sense, I propose a classification that divides the generic category "idea" into four types. The idea may define: (1) a product, that is, the *constitution* of a material entity (this constitution may either be defined originally by the artist or result from the appropriation of an existing entity); (2) a set of instructions for the *conception* of a product; (3) a set of instructions for the *material achievement* of a product; (4) a set of instructions, the observance of which is itself the work. These four types could simply be divided into two main groups, but I have not done this because there are two distinct ways of defining the two main groups:

- The first would involve dividing the ideas that directly focus on the characteristics of a product and those that are comprised of instructions (a possibility shown in the shaded area of the diagram below). From this perspective, the first type would be in opposition with the remaining three types. But this classification is very incomplete because it does not take into account the difference between, on the one hand, instructions that seek to achieve a product and, on the other, instructions of which the observance is a performance work in itself (an event or action) – which are very different things.
- The second would involve distinguishing the ideas that have a product as their reference and those that do not (a possibility shown inside the box with thicker lines in the diagram below) This criterion would join together the first three types and set apart the last – the type aimed at purely performance works. But this classification is also very incomplete because it places together, for example, "ideas regarding objects" and "ideas regarding processes" (whether more intellectual or more material processes).

It should be noted that there are no "ideas of form" within the scope of conceptual art. This possibility is found in the work of Malevich (in enunciations such as, for example, "black square on a white background", a work from 1915) or, perhaps, in the scope of minimalist art. But, to the extent that "ideas of form" are associated to investigations on the formal essence of the work of art, they are foreign to the scope of conceptual art.

The different types of ideas are summarised in the following diagram:



Finally, in order to complete the analysis of the idea proposed here, it should also be noted that any set of instructions might serve to be followed either by the artist or by someone else, specifically the receivers of the work[66] (as happens in a context prior to conceptual art, in the instructions of Yoko Ono[67]).

[66] From the perspective of the "idea", the statements of Weiner are a very particular situation, not only because they are simultaneously a product (when placed on a stand) and a reference to a product, but also because they are ambiguous as a reference to a product: they are a hybrid of (1) "description of the result" and (3) "instruction to be followed". Additionally, they also put into question the agent who executes the instructions provided.

[67] Regarding the history of art based on instructions, see: Bruce Altshuler, "Art by Instruction and the Pre-History of *do it*", in http://www.e-flux.com/projects/do_it/notes/essay/e002_text.html [originally published by: New York: Independent Curators Incorporated. 1997]; regarding the work of Yoko Ono, see: Yoko Ono, *Grapefruit: A Book of Instructions and Drawings by Yoko Ono*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000 [originally published: Tokyo: Wunternaum Press, 1964].

2 → 3. enunciability

This subchapter shall deal with the consequences of what was defined above, in as far as relates to the function that the work – in the sense of "realised work" – acquires in view of the preponderance of the idea that defines it. If the idea is so very preponderant, what is the point of realising the work? Is it really necessary? And if it is realised, what status does the work acquire, in its position of entity subordinated to the idea? What meaning does materiality acquire in this context? Is *experiencing* the work still of any relevance? These are the questions I shall attempt to answer here. They address the requirements and implications of *enunciability* – the attribute that I propose as capable of defining of the work of conceptual art.

This theme shall first be introduced through reference to the statements of Lawrence Weiner, then moving forwards to the more radical version of enunciability – the version proposed by Joseph Kosuth and by the Art & Language collective. It is these artists who most paradigmatically discredit the specificity of the concrete work, favouring the abstract field of the formulation of the idea. From that point forwards, I propose to deal with two sets of questions separately: those that refer to the possibility that the work is *in fact* enunciable; and those that refer to the characteristics that the work acquires when placed in a role subordinate to the idea. These two thematic areas shall correspond to two subchapters. In this subchapter, the arguments of Mel Bochner against enunciability[68] shall be examined in order to argue, by comparing and contrasting them, that it is an attribute not only valid but also defining of the work of conceptual art. In the following subchapter, I shall compare and contrast the Kosuth and Art & Language models, to argue that, despite its enunciability, it is not possible for a work to exist entirely in an ideal plane and, instead, it is subject to formal requirements. More specifically, I will defend that the formal and material quality of the work is measured by its *literalness* in relation to the idea – an attribute by means of which the work can perform its function.

Hopefully, after this, the meaning of the statement *the work is the literal translation of the idea that defines it* will be clearer.

From 1968 onwards, Weiner presents enunciations of the pieces he imagines to the public. He calls them *statements* and presents them in a variety of supports, ranging from paper to urban walls. They are – or, at least, appear to be – a perfect example of what I designate as enunciability in this dissertation. The enunciation, to the extent that it results from the work of the artist, is self-sufficient to the point that it can be presented to the public. In 1972, Weiner starts to describe his works in a schematic method, as a simple

[68] This standpoint of Bochner occurs at a later stage, after the serialist manifests referred to earlier.

addition: “language + the materials referred to”. From a linguistic perspective, it could be said that (1) what Weiner designates as “language” is the signifier and (2) “the materials referred to” are the referent.

First of all, one can ask: does the fact that Weiner only presents enunciations of the pieces mean, in fact, that their realisation became superfluous? If Weiner’s statements are analysed from a historiographical perspective, taking into account the context in which they arise, one of the possible answers to this question – is yes. When Weiner produces his first statements[69], the autonomy given to the enunciation has a strong political sense[70]. Weiner’s operating model, proclaimed in the *statement of intent* and exemplified in *Statements*, seeks to challenge the then current artistic establishment or, at least poetically speaking, to propose a new one. Weiner considers the execution of a work a perfunctory task, as does LeWitt, but for Weiner this assumption is also the starting point for the invention of a “social model” for art. More than the objects and the images, the verbal language may be conveyed, be communicated by word of mouth or in writing through different supports, becoming readily available. It frees the artwork from its market value and the sense of property. The discovery of a work that can be executed by anyone, or that cannot be executed at all, revolutionises the role of the artist, the type of product that results from their activity, the encounter between the public and the artwork, and the role of the receiver. It allows for transgression regarding the protocols that are found at the heart of recognition and institutionalisation of the work of art as well as, in light of the values existing at the time, “democratising art”. In an interview held in 1972, Weiner states that:

> Once you know about a work of mine, you own it. There’s no way I can climb into somebody’s head and remove it.[71]

In this framework of values, the statements of Weiner are in fact viewed as totally enunciable and therefore revolutionary works of art. The idea contains within itself the meaning that the executed work might possess and, to that extent, it is indifferent whether the work is actually executed or not. The intention of the artist is guaranteed in either case.

Weiner’s works do not boil down to this characterisation. But is seems to be sufficient – and this is what I intend at this time – to set a starting point for discussing enunciability. It is in this way that the statements of Weiner are understood, namely by Joseph Kosuth. When, at the end of 1969, Kosuth publishes the essential tripartite essay “Art after Philosophy”, Weiner is one of the artists mentioned in the second part, titled “’Conceptual Art and Recent Art”. For Kosuth, and according to that text, the step that

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[69] Enunciability is not experimented exclusively by Weiner. In addition to these initiatives made together with Siegelaub (responsible, namely, for the publication of *Statements*), the works of other artists are also presented in the form of enunciation as part of other initiatives promoted by Siegelaub. For example, in the exhibition *January 5-31, 1969*, the 32 works of the 4 artists are all enunciated in the catalogue and not all of them are present in the office rooms where the exhibition is presented to the public. See: Seth Siegelaub (ed.), *January 5-31, 1969* (exhibition catalogue), New York: Seth Siegelaub, 1969.

[70] The political dimension of the statements can only be understood, in fact, in light of the specific *historical context* in which they are originally made, within the scope of which placing an enunciations in the place where images or objects were usually to be found is a subversive attitude. This is particularly clear if one considers that producing the same works today would not provoke the same effect.

[71] Interview with the artist, *Avalanche* 4 (Spring 1972), p. 72.

Weiner takes when he decides to keep his works as enunciations is a step that relates to the type of *place* in which the work exists. He wrote:

> It became obvious to [Weiner] that if one is not concerned with "appearance" (...) there was not only no need for the fabrication (...) of his work, but – more important – such fabrication would again invariably give his work's "place" a specific context.[72]

Kosuth determines an opposition between, on the one hand, a *generic* place, without a material dimension, where works can exist in a state of "pure language" and, on the other, *specific* places – those that works occupy once they are realised, becoming subject to the material vicissitudes that this implementation may imply. He argues that conceptual art works are generic. In a linguistic perspective, this is as much as saying that the realisation of the referent (the enunciated work) adds nothing to the signifier (the enunciation). For Kosuth, in the works of Weiner, it is sufficient that the referent should exist merely as the referent, that is, through the signifier. It is possible for the work to exist only in the *ideal* plane; or it is in the ideal plane alone that the work truly exists.

Kosuth's opinion on Weiner's works – which, as we shall see, was quite depreciative – is not limited to these considerations. In truth, what Kosuth does here is project his theoretical position regarding the works of Weiner – a position that can be illustrated through his own works. One of the first strategies that Kosuth used to empty out the "work as an object" was to create a short-circuit between signifier and referent, turning them *literally* into equivalents or redundant in relation to each other. Using neon letters, he produces works that are constituted only by enunciations such as:

- *Five Words in Blue Neon*, 1965 [109]. The work is a definition of itself. It consists of a tautology. The content and components – or the referent and the signifier – are placed in a situation in which they mirror each other. In this way, the work is radically emptied of the elements external to its own enunciation. Diagrammatically: **work ↔ idea of the work**
- *Self-Described and Self-Defined*, 1965 [110]. If, in the abovementioned work, the condition of the "self-described and self-defined entity" is exemplified, in this work that condition is only enunciated. The verbal expression that constituted the work no longer has a material referent and expresses the condition of any other artwork that presents its own enunciation. The game of mirrors increases in complexity. The "idea of the work" no longer has a specular connection with the "work" (a material entity) and instead has a connection with the actual specular connection between the "work" and the "idea of the work"[73]. Diagrammatically: **idea of the work ↔ (work ↔ idea of the work)**

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[72] Kosuth, "Art after Philosophy", em Art after Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966-1990, ed. Gabriele Guercio, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 1991, p. 27 [originally published in: *Studio International* 916 (November 1969), pp. 134-137.

[73] Johanna Drucker, in the passage from "works that are self-defined" (tautological) to "works that evoke the condition of works that are self-defined", identifies a step backwards to the greenbergian formalism that Kosuth wishes to oppose.
see: Drucker, "The Crux of Conceptualism", p. 257-258.

However, as indirect as its presence may be (as is the case in the second work), the material referent is integrated as part of a *game*. An *effect* is produced around the issue of the work as an object. In a later cycle of works, Kosuth goes on to demonstrate that the object is definitively irrelevant. And he does so in a literal, almost scientific manner, as if he were illustrating a thesis. I will use as an example one of the most famous works of conceptual art: *One and Three Chairs*, which is installed in several different settings between 1965 and 1967. In this work, Kosuth places three entities side by side that present the same object: (1) the object itself (a readymade), (2) a photograph of the object at a scale of 1:1, taken on the exact spot where it is exhibited to the public, and (3) a dictionary definition of the object amplified to poster size (a sort of "readymade enunciation" of the object[74]). In the title, the noun that designated the object is preceded by the words *One and Three...*, revealing that despite several types of signifier, it is always the same thing. The "thing in itself" and the "verbal enunciation of the thing" are equated to the "visual representation of the thing" (as is customary in visual arts). The meaning of this work lies in the similarity and difference between the three entities presented. Employing the terminology of Gottlob Frege, it could be said that Kosuth always makes *reference* to the same thing, but in three different *senses*, that is, by applying three different *modes of presentation*[75]. It would seem that the best thing to say is that the meaning of the work resides in exploration of *sense*. It is this that determines the difference between the three entities. But Kosuth is not interested in the question of representation or, rather, the *presentation* (this is Weiner's theme). Instead, for Kosuth, it is a matter of stating the discoursive dimension of art and, in this sense, to depreciate something as contingent as the object used as an example in the construction of the discourse. As proof of this, Kosuth produces several versions of *One and Three...*, selecting quite dissimilar objects to realise the work other than the famous chair, among which a hammer, a triangle ruler, a leather coat, a frying pan, a box of goods, etc. Even in relation to the chair, he uses several different models without implying any change to the meaning of the work [112 . 113 . 114].

Kosuth's work progressively develops towards turning the material dimension of things increasingly less necessary, or even adverse to what he understands as the essence of art. In 1969, looking back retrospectively at his career, Kosuth states:

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[74] As Kotz notes, the work contains an ambiguity regarding the relationship between the text *presented* and the *enunciation*. The dictionary definition is part of the work, but does not enunciate its tripartite constitution. Kotz makes the observation that "(...) behind Kosuth's apparent equivalence of object, photography, and text, there is another text: the "production instructions or drawings" that double as a certificate of ownership, and are not exhibited." This observation is referenced in a footnote to a text written by the artist himself. On the other hand, the definition of "chair" in not merely an enunciation of the chair or of the image of the chair because, in addition to the reference to a chair, the text includes considerations that overshoot by a large extent what might be the enunciation. But this definition, although it is not the enunciation, could be viewed as *a representation* of the enunciation or, instead, as a readymade enunciation. The dictionary definition, viewed as an enunciation of "chair", is excessive in length and content, but is indispensable in order to demonstrate that the symbolic value of "chair" is distant from the meaning of the work to the extent that it can be reduced to the objectivity of just a dictionary definition. Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At*, p. 193; see: Joseph Kosuth, "Intention(s)", in Alberro & Blake Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art*, p. 466 [originally published in *Art Bulletin*, 78: 3, September 1996, pp. 407-412].

[75] Gottlob Frege, "Sobre o Sentido e a Referência", in *Lógica e Filosofia da Linguagem*, transl. Paulo Alcoforado, São Paulo: Cultrix, 1978 [originally published under the title "Uber Sinn und Bedeutung", *Zeitschrift für Philosofie und philosophische Kritik*, 100, 1892, pp. 25-50].

> (...) a few years ago I became increasingly aware of the fact that the separation between one's ideas and one's use of material, if not wide at the inception of the work, becomes almost uncommunicatively wide when confronted by a viewer. I wanted to eliminate the gap. I also began to realize that there is nothing abstract about a specific material. There is always something hopelessly real about materials, be they ordered or unordered.[76]

This statement refers quite specifically to the creation of an "art paradigm" which Kosuth summarises as *Art as Idea as Idea* and which marks the stage of his work that starts in 1966[77]. Kosuth claims an artistic practice that no longer seeks the production of conceptual *artworks* (art as an idea), instead the presentation of conceptual art as an idea of art ("art as an idea" as an idea)[78] [111]. In this setting, the materiality of the artwork is depreciated in two ways. Firstly, in this new model by Kosuth, the artwork is no longer referenced through a material object or entity. The existence of a material entity exterior to the entity presented in not evoked explicitly or implicitly. The referent is excluded. Secondly, even in as far as concerns the entity presented, Kosuth reduced the materiality to the narrow domain of "contingency of communication", in other words, the materiality is present in his artwork as far as strictly necessary in order to establish communicating entities[79]. In this way, a radical separation is promoted between, on the one hand, an entirely abstract or *conceptual* artistic content – which Kosuth designates as "proposition" – and, on the other, the contingent communication of that content – which Kosuth designates as "form of presentation"[80].

Kosuth is not alone in adopting assumptions of this type. The members of the Art & Language collective (Kosuth at one point is one of them), also centres its practices in the theoretical discussion in itself and reduce the "work" to the narrowest possible *communication* of that discussion. They do so in a more radical manner than Kosuth. The work therefore acquires a function similar to that of a book: the relationship with the printed text in a book may be conditioned by the graphic composition of its pages, the type and size of the font, the quality of the paper, etc., but nonetheless, the contents of the text do not depend on those factors or vary from one edition to the next. Terry Atkinson, a member of the Art & Language collective, in the editorial of the first issue of the magazine *Art-Language* raises the possibility

> (...) that this editorial, in itself an attempt to evince some outlines as to what "conceptual art" is, is held out as a "conceptual art" work.[81]

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[76] Arthur R. Rose, "Four Interviews", in Battcock (ed.), *Idea Art*, p. 144-145.
[77] Explicitly, the works of Kosuth during this stage are subtitled *Art as Idea as Idea*.
[78] See: Joseph Kosuth, "Introduction to Function", in *Art after Philosophy and After*, pp. 41-42 [originally published in: *Function Funzione Funcion Fonction Funktion*, Turino: Sperone, 1970].
[79] Kosuth states in an interview that "even the most abstract work has a kind of concrete level, which is the fact that the functional part of it must be contextually contingent". Joseph Kosuth, "Art as Idea as Idea: An Interview with Jeanne Siegel", in *Art after Philosophy and After*, p. 50. [originally broadcast by WBAI-FM on the 7th April 1970. Later published under the title "Joseph Kosuth: Art as Idea as Idea" in Jeanne Siegel, *Artwords: Discourse on the 60s and 70s*, Ann Arbor: UMI research Press, 1985, pp. 221-231.]
[80] See: Joseph Kosuth, "Context Text", in *Art after Philosophy and After*, p. 87 [originally published as an introduction to *The Sixth Investigation 1969, Proposition 14*, Koln: Gerd de Vries, 1971].
[81] Terry Atkinson, "Introduction", *Art-Language: The Journal of Conceptual Art* 1:1 (May 1969), p. 1.

Despite the fact that this possibility can be seen as a provocation, it serves to illustrate the paradigm of "pure conceptuality" – the paradigm that tends to annul the "work in itself" in its role as intermediary between the theoretical speculation performed by the artist(s) and its receivership by the public. The work is meant to be the least possible mediator between proposition and receiver. It should be transparent. Fully *instrumentalised*. In this situation, materiality is a "necessary evil". It is of no interest other than with regard to the duty it can perform as a strictly functional vehicle, nullified in the expression of itself, entirely subordinated to the proposition. It is easy to understand, in this way, that language is so frequently used in conceptual art: language is substance without body and can be used in a purely instrumental manner just as it is used in scientific compendiums.

It is not possible to imagine art that is more intellectualised than this. Despite being a descendent of the traditional visual arts, it radically contrasts with "retinal art", to borrow Duchamp's expression. The work is stripped of the attributes which, usually, allow it to be valued in itself as a physical entity, in other words, through its ability to produce stimulation for the senses – colour, shape, proportion, spatiality, etc. The experience of contacting the work, in the phenomenological sense, loses its meaning. Kosuth asserts that

> (...) art's viability is not connected to the presentation of visual (or other) kinds of experience.[82]

This paradigm of "pure conceptuality", immune to the contingencies of form and material, is the source of objections both by several critics (including Thierry du Duve and Benjamin H. Buchloh[83]) and by other conceptual artists. Among the latter, Bochner stands out because of the consistency of the theoretical reasoning which, in his case, accompanies the position assumed in his artistic practices. In an interview with John Coplans in 1974, Bochner assumes a peremptory attitude, stating that:

> A doctrinaire Conceptualist viewpoint would say that the two relevant features of the "ideal Conceptual work" would be that it have an exact linguistic correlative, that is, it could be described and experienced in its description, and that it be infinitely repeatable. It must have absolutely no "aura", no uniqueness to it whatsoever.[84]

Bochner adopts a critical standpoint with regard to what he describes as the "doctrinal point of view", identifying it with two assumptions (of doubtful merit): the work is enunciable and the work is repeatable. I shall start off discussing the former – the one where Bochner considers the possibility that the enunciation, designated as a "linguistic correlative" of the work, is sufficient in order to present that work. By putting the problem in this way, Bochner distinguishes between, on the one hand, contact with the description of the work and, on the other hand, contact with the work itself – a distinction which, from his point of view,

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[82] Kosuth, "Art after Philosophy", p. 22.
[83] See: de Duve, *Kant after Duchamp*; Buchloh, "From the Aesthetics of Administration to Institutional Critique".
[84] Mel Bochner, "Mel Bochner on Malevich: An Interview", interview by John Coplans, in Mel Bochner, *Solar System & Rest Rooms: Writings and Interviews 1965-2007*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 2008, p. 115 [originally published in *Artforum* 12 (June 1974), pp. 59-63].

doctrinal conceptualism seeks to do away with. For Bochner only *the* work – the work that results from the confrontation with, and marked by, the vicissitudes of the means – is a complete entity and may be experimented, presuming therefore that its enunciation is insufficient.

This is something Bochner had grown to believe over the years. According to Scott Rothkopf, it resulted from the evolution of the artist between 1966 and 1969 in the field of photography. In photography, Bochner sought a neutral mechanism that transformed ideas into images. He did not abandon the most objective laws of foundation and construction of knowledge (such as those which were the theme of the works he produced based on serialism), but instead subjected them to confrontation with the material plane of his representation or of the entities to which they applied. He performed several different experiments. The first of those experiments related to the possibility of an *objective representation*. He attempted to fix images of serial objects in as neutral a manner as possible. He encountered several difficulties, among which the inevitability of having a point of view and the resulting perspective distortion. Then, he promoted a direct confrontation between the abstract assumptions subjacent to consideration of things and the things in their material dimensions. He performed experiments both by the manipulation of material aspects of the photographic process (adopting the actual "matter" of photographic processes as a theme[85]), and by confronting abstract systems and material entities within the scope of photography. In 1968, in a series of photographs called *Singer Lab Measurement*, Bochner contrasts graphical elevation elements (such as those used in technical drawings) with fragments of laboratory reality [121] – a strategy which he then applied to his own body [122] and then to an area in a gallery as an installation [123]. Bochner did not attain objectivity. As Rothkopf puts it,

> Bochner was forced to notice the idiosyncrasies of the medium and the difficulties in creating a fully "conceptually" predetermined art[86].

From this point forward, whenever he enunciates mathematical rules, he does not do so by using digits and diagrams, but by applying them to the disposition of concrete entities such as hazelnuts or small stones [125]. He eliminates the mediators, in favour of "things themselves" (expression by Husserl used by Bochner). Although he doesn't valorise the formal qualities of the objects, he remains relatively close to minimalist "literalism" – literalism that the artist himself defines stating that:

> (...) the thing is the thing and not a representation of the thing; there's no mediation at work.[87]

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[85] This aspect of Bochner's investigation can be connected to the concept of *faktura* in the acceptation given it by Vladimir Tatlin. Regarding this subject, vide: Conio, *Le Constructivisme Russe*.
[86] Scott Rothkopf, *Mel Bochner Photographs, 1966-1969* (exhibition catalogue), New Haven/London: Yale University Press / Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard Art Museum, 2002, p. 16.
[87] Ibidem, p. 11.

The "things themselves" are therefore inalienable. No transparent or neutral media exist between an abstract idea and the receivership of the work. If the medium is inevitable and is inevitably significant, the work cannot be substituted by its enunciation and can only be *experimented*. While Kosuth evolved towards eliminating any referent from his works, Bochner evolved towards eliminating the signifier and favouring the presence of the referent.

This negative statement regarding enunciability may be viewed in an opposite sense: the enunciation is always, itself, a thing. The enunciation cannot escape, itself, from its dependence of any one *medium* that will always inevitably be necessary to serve as its support. In 1969, Bochner wrote:

> 2.
> ——
> NO THOUGHT EXISTS WITHOUT A SUSTAINING SUPPORT BUT LANGUAGE MAKES US THINK IT'S POSSIBLE TO HAVE CONCEPTS —— THIS CONCEPT-PERCEPT DUALISM IS TOO SIMPLE TO CONVEY WHAT ACTUALLY OCCURS, FOR NO THINKING CAN BE DONE WITHOUT THINKING ABOUT SOMETHING. 'SEEING' ISN'T THINKING, NOR, IS THE SOMEWHAT CLOUDY PROCESS OF 'CONJURING UP' THE "CONCEPT" TYPE ART WANTS TO CONVEY..
> LANGUAGE IS NOT TRANSPARENT.[88]

He writes this in a work. Or, to be more precise, this text – called *Notecard* (No thought exists...) – is in fact a work of his. He writes it on a scorecard showing the marks of the hesitation in his writing, crossing out some words and adding others, giving the process of choosing words a purposefully spontaneous appearance. And it is handwritten, giving the text a personal expression. That same year, Bochner adopted a similar graphic strategy to fix the last sentence in this manifest: *Language Is Not Transparent*. It is written in chalk on a background of black paint left to drip. He therefore chooses two materials that, seeing that they reveal their manipulation, serve to emphasise their own material condition [124].

From a more general point of view, this statement by Bochner results from his conviction that the universe of concrete things is the primordial thematic base of all thought. But in as far as concerns enunciability, it summarises the claim that no neutral media for communication exist. Bochner claims this by resorting simultaneously to the language content and the handwriting itself.

Though without the intention of issuing a judgment of value regarding Bochner's conclusions as to the inalienability of matter and the substantiality of the *media* (namely of language), there are problems that can be raised with regard to the *illations* that can be taken from those conclusions in as far as specifically relates to the enunciability of the work. What I mean by this is that, rather than putting the results of Bochner's research into question, I intend to question the fact that they imply that enunciability is not viable.

The proposal is to make a demonstration by using an example – one of the first enunciable works in the history of art, perhaps the most charismatic artwork of the 20th Century. When one looks at a copy of the

Fountain by Duchamp [153], it does not seem that there is a material aspect of the urinal that can in any way downplay the fact that this work is constituted by a urinal. The fact that the work *is* a urinal is not only perfectly enunciable, but also sufficient in order to access the meaning of the work. The exact model of the urinal, the quality of the porcelain, the way that the glassy surface reflects the room's light or, even, the coldness that the artwork suggests do not affect the construction of that meaning. The work does not fail to be experienced, as would be desired by "pure conceptualism", but this experience is subordinated to the fact that one is face to face with a work which, because it has an enunciable composition, is placed within the scope of the purely discoursive.

As Bochner specifically refers to language, one can also refer to a work with verbal elements. One can even refer to Bochner's own work *Language Is Not Transparent*. Even this work, with a deliberately expressionist component, can in fact be enunciated. This work has been discussed here without being accompanied by an image, which seems sufficient evidence of its enunciability, but it is possible to provide examples of enunciations it could hypothetically possess. Resorting to a verbal conjugation in the passive voice and the past indicative, in the image of Weiner, one could have an enunciation along the lines of: *the phrase "language is not transparent" written in chalk on a background of black paint left to drip*. Or, in a more instructive tone (such as that used by Yoko Ono during the period when she was part of the *Fluxus* collective), it might say: *write "language is not transparent" with a piece of chalk on a background of black paint left to drip*. It is true that neither the exact form of the black background nor the uniqueness of the calligraphy of the words written in chalk are enunciable. But this isn't to say that the meaning of the work is not contained in the enunciation. The differences that would occur between hypothetical realisations of one of these enunciations might render each of them unique but, in as far as concerns the meaning of the work, those differences would tend to be irrelevant – noticeable, but irrelevant.

Moving forwards to the second assumption that Bochner associates to the "doctrinal perspective": the reproducibility of the work of art. Enunciability presupposes a matrix – the idea – which serves as the reference for the realisation of the work. The idea is a matrix. From the idea, it is possible to produce any number of reproductions of the work (a quantity that Weiner, for example, claims to depend on the decision of the receivers of his statements). For Bochner, reproducibility merely condenses the "absence of aura" that already results from the fact that enunciability allows the body of the work to be dispensed with, in other words, that already results from equating experiencing the enunciation to experiencing the work. (Bochner is now at a point of his artistic career where it is hard to find correspondence with the photocopying process by which he reproduces drawings from the *dossiers* of *Working Drawings...*)

Reproducibility and absence of aura are themes referred to in the essential text "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit" (The *Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*) by

Walter Benjamin[89]. Both Benjamin and Bochner put forwards their arguments around the "here and now of the work of art – its unique existence at the place where it is to be found"[90]. But this parallel between Benjamin and Bochner is misleading. Taking into consideration the aura within the scope of conceptual art, only through error could one compare the statements made by Benjamin regarding the historical context of mass industrial reproduction. Benjamin refers to the extinction of the personal aura of objects manufactured through industrial *production* processes, particularly in art. His interest lies in the fact that the objects produced industrially are the undifferentiated result of the reproduction of a *physical matrix*. Benjamin makes reference to the reproducibility that results from the use of matrices such as, for example, the cast of an artwork or the negative of a photograph. Conversely, Bochner states his opinion against a conceptual doctrinal framework in which the *matrix of the reproduction – the idea – has an abstract nature*. The idea may contain data regarding the matter, as was said, but it is not a material entity. When the matrix in question is purely enunciative, the loss of the aura, as Benjamin describes it, does not even come into question.

This seems to be the exact point where the convictions of Bochner and enunciability diverge: Bochner refers to the idea starting off from assumptions that do not contemplate the *discoursive* specificity of the conceptual matrix nor the specificity of the "reproduction" system associated to it. This information allows us to fully understand the progress of Bochner in photography which, as Rothkopf states, leads him to conclude that it is not possible to achieve a level of representation that is absolutely objective and that the vicissitudes of capturing the image – the confrontation with the environment – do not allow for full objectivity. It is a fact that objective representation is unattainable. But it is also a fact that relates to *representation* and not to *enunciability*. The photographic depiction tested by Bochner uses as its referents entities – serial sculptures – which, although mathematically generated, still possess a material nature. Although they are generated by serial logic, they are still sculptures. It is in view of these material references that one may determine whether objectivity is possible or not. This does not occur in the realisation of an idea. Once again, it is essential to consider that the idea, established in the form of enunciation or otherwise, *is not material*. While representation (like reproduction) becomes a material entity from a material entity, the "realisation of an idea" becomes a material entity from an abstract entity.

All of this is solved in the statements made by Weiner. Despite proposing an operating model of radical enunciability and radical reproducibility, Weiner states in an interview:

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[89] Walter Benjamin, "A Obra de Arte na Era da sua Reprodutibilidade Técnica", transl. Maria Luz Moita, in *Sobre Arte, Técnica, Linguagem e Política*, Lisboa: Relógio d'Água, 1992, pp. 71-113 [originally published in 1936-39]. Regarding the history of this essay and particularly how it has dated, see: Walter Benjamin, *A Modernidade*, ed. & transl. João Barrento, Lisboa: Assório & Alvim, 2006, pp. 460-506.
[90] Benjamin, "A Obra de Arte...", p. 77.

> P: What is the subject matter of your work, would you say?
>
> WEINER: Materials.[91]

Weiner's statements are not consistent either with the depreciation of matter as prescribed by Kosuth and by the Art & Language collective, or with Bochner's naturalist perspective contrary to enunciability. On the one hand, as "works that are merely enunciations", statements do not exclude the material referent. When Kosuth speaks positively of the fact that Weiner keeps his works in a non-specific location, in a state of verbal abstraction, he is making a partial consideration that is only completed when he adds that the inclusion of Weiner, as well as the artist Robert Barry, in the "conceptual art" category occurs "almost by accident". What they have in common is "the fact that [their] "path" to conceptual art came via decisions related to choices of art materials and processes"[92]. In another text, in which he refers to American conceptual art, Kosuth states that "(...) much of it is really a kind of Minimal art using words (...)"[93] – a criticism that was aimed at Weiner, among others. On the other hand, as "works on materiality", the statements promote experimentation that is not circumscribed to a simple understanding of matter. In these statements the *enunciated materiality* patent in the relationship between the verbal content and the materiality of the enunciated work (rejected by Bochner) is made to interact with the *materiality of the enunciation,* i.e. the physical presence of the verbal elements that constitute the enunciation (supported by Bochner).

Liz Kotz noted a paradox in this duality. She stated:

> Part of the paradox of Weiner's work (...) rests with his insistence on using language explicitly positioned within a communicative function while nonetheless remaining sculpture – a contradiction he acknowledges when he states that "the only thing that interested me was the attempt to deal with the presentation of information by use of materials – paint, canvas, steel, stone, etc. – which had nothing to do with the presentation of information".[94]

Weiner's words, quoted by Kotz, are notoriously biased. The statements are not limited to a mere reuse of the "raw material of the work" as "raw material of the enunciation". This is a reductionist perspective. Firstly, Weiner's statements began by appearing in publications, where their presence was in fact only related to the "presentation of information" and where they had a material expression that did not go beyond the scope of typographical arrangement. Then, the interest that the statements gained when they passed from pages of publications to situations where they were on "display" was precisely due to the ambiguity of the place where the "sculpture" was to be found — either in the signifier or in the referent. It is in that ambiguity that its interest resides. Rather than a paradox, it would be more appropriate to talk about a multiplication of interfaces between the realms of the verbal and the material. Language works as an

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[91] Rose, "Four Interviews", p. 149.
[92] Kosuth, "Art after Philosophy", p. 27.
[93] Kosuth, "Art as Idea as Idea", p. 55.
[94] Kotz, *Words to Be Looked at*, p. 198.

inquirer at the heart of the relationship between signifier and referent[95]. As David Batchelor states, this results in the network of relationships in Weiner's works between:

- *statement*, as the entity presented, simultaneously verbal (because constituted by words) and material (because inscribed on a support);
- *display context*, as the context where the presentation is made, marked by the statement's presence;
- *enunciated work,* as an entity that, although absent, is evoked as the referent of the statement[96].

The work is not to be found just in the enunciation presented or just in the enunciated referent. The work resides in the interaction between these various "ingredients" – the interaction that is situated in a specific context, conditioning and conditioned by that context.

Weiner's statements serve to illustrate that the enunciability departs from both the purism of Kosuth and Art & Language — that seeks to achieve the "work without body" — and from Bochner's scepticism regarding the enunciability of the work of art — that seems an overreaction to the discovery of the impossibility of a "work without body"[97]. Even if moving in opposite directions, "pure conceptualism" and Bochner come to a common, relatively orthodox assumption: that the "experience of absence" is less of an *experience* than the "experience of presence". Kosuth believes that it is possible to detach the work from that part of it which is destined for a sensory experience – without taking into consideration that this may lead to the quite particular "experience of absence". Bochner believes that sensory experience arises from the vicissitudes of matter – without taking into consideration that the "experience of absence" of those vicissitudes of matter is an experience in itself. But Weiner's statements also serve to illustrate that the consequences of enunciability are not limited to the resolution of that apparent antithesis. They demonstrate, above all, that enunciability is the starting point for the invention of modes of definition of the work and, therefore, for the *invention of the work*. They also demonstrate that materiality and experience of enunciable works should not be assessed based on apriorisms (be they idealistic or naturalistic) but, instead, enunciability is a territory for reinventing such materiality and experience.

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[95] Weiner's statements can be included within the theme of modern art paradigmatically illustrated in the famous phrase "This Is Not a Pipe" that René Magritte associated to the painting of a pipe. In doing so, Magritte produced a double effect. First, he brings to light the condition of *signifier* of the pictorial entity presented to the public: what is presented is not a pipe but the depiction of a pipe. It is not the "thing itself". Then, to the extent that he relativizes the correspondence between that autonomous signifier and the respective referent (in other words, between the depiction and the thing depicted), Magritte makes it evident that, even when with reference to reality, the work of the artist exists in a dimension that is not confused with that reality. Representation is a field of artificiality that is not governed according to the same rules of the original context of the thing represented. Weiner, naturally, is a step further ahead. The material entities that Weiner enunciates in his statements are not *represented*, which would imply a mimetic relationship with the referent. They are merely *presented* as a possibility. Weiner is no longer centred on the issue of *re-presentation*, but rather on the issue of *presentation* – a possibility introduced into art by the readymades of Duchamp and that acquires maturity in minimalist objects. But in addition to this, to the extent that it does not present "the things in itself", within the context of the presentation, Weiner deals specifically with enunciability. The enunciability is the resource that allows Weiner to proceed, in the system of presentation of the work, to a dislocation of entities – the dislocation of a verbal entity for the place traditionally occupied by images and / or objects and the dislocation of the "concrete entity enunciated by the verbal entity" outside the scope of the presentation.

[96] See: Batchelor, "Many Colored Objects", pp. 74-83.

[97] The use of the word "body" is inspired by a question raised by Johanna Drucker in an essay seeking to demonstrate that pictures possess their own discourse (and who was consulted with regard to this theme): *Does an idea need a body?* Drucker, "The Crux of Conceptualism", pp. 251-268.

This could explain why Weiner, after enunciating works so that their execution was made available outside the standards of the art market, starts to enunciate works whose referent is no longer plausible and enters the field of purely poetic evocation such as, for example, AND THEN THERE WERE NONE, in 1970. Frege would say that in this way the statements change from having a *referent* (a concrete entity to which they refer), to only having a *significant* (a discernible meaning, but unrelated to a concrete entity)[98].

This could also explain why the idea is not limited to the possibility of an "idea of a product" or of an "idea that leads to a product" and, instead of that, is open to other possibilities. The work of art departs from the "condition of artifactuality" imposed on it by the philosopher George Dickie. For Dickie, "the status of being art (...) is reached by the creative use of a means"[99]. *It still is* reached in this way. As I see it, this is one of the obstacles met by this author when taking the enunciability of conceptual art into consideration – for two reasons. Firstly, one of the characteristics of conceptual art is, precisely, releasing art from the condition of artifactuality. It is *post-medium* art [100].

On the one hand, from the perspective of the actual means, it is the possibility of the works merely being enunciated that frees the visual arts from the need of the object and widens its *means* to territories that approach the verbal evocation of literature or the fugaciousness of performance arts. Indeed, enunciability creates territories with a hybrid nature that departs from classifications such as "visual arts" – a possibility with which Dickie's theory seems unprepared to deal with. On the other hand, the indifference regarding the artifactuality that characterises conceptual art may contribute to the critical objective of questioning the formal and material condition of the artwork, in particular its own "condition of artifactuality". (In an expanded perspective, I would go as far as saying that attempting to stabilise a set of assumptions capable of defining "art" is paradoxical, in that art finds its definition, in part, by the destabilisation of this type of assumptions.)

Moreover, Dickie does not contemplate the possibility that enunciability may lead to artifacts or not. To the extent that conceptual art is identified with an exclusive use of specification – that is, as the possibility of *just* enunciating a work[101] – for Dickie a statement by Weiner would constitute conceptual art, but *One and Three Chairs* would not, because it is an artifact. Although "resulting from specification" implies "being enunciable", the opposite is not true. Enunciability relates to the fact that the constitution of the work is discoverable through a discoursive means, while specification, in Dickie's acceptation, is the procedure that leads to the works that are enunciations only. The former relates to the existence of the idea (the different types that have already been analysed); the latter relates to the type of entity that the work is (a subject that will be addressed in the final part of this chapter).

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[98] See: Frege, "Sobre o Sentido e a Referência".
[99] George Dickie, "A Teoria Institucional da Arte", in Moura (ed.), *Arte em Teoria*, p. 117.
[100] "*Post-medium*" is a term which was established to a large extent, although originally as criticism, by Krauss in: Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1999.
[101] See: Dickie, "A Teoria Institucional da Arte", pp. 130-131.

3. The work as a *literal translation*

No work is communicable until some formal or material expression of it reaches its receivers, regardless of how far the limits of materiality can be experimented, and even if a choice is made for performance-based forms of expression. In this respect, Thomas McEvilley argues that "... since the brain is a material thing and its operations have a chemical aspect, even mind-objects or language pieces are kinds of material objects"[102]. Even without taking the argument this far, it is clear that no means used to achieve an artwork is exempt of form, or neutral in its expression. From this point of view, one could say that I tend to agree with Bochner when he points out the form or the matter of the work as the decisive factor[103]. I also believe they are decisive factors but because — as opposed to what Bochner sustained — they are transparent. When I use the adjective "transparent" I do not mean an absence of expression, but rather a very particular sort of expression: the apparent absence of expression. This is the subject — the very particular expression of the work of conceptual art– that I will now address.

As I stated earlier, the idea works as a matrix: it is an entity that holds the meaning of the work and based on which specific items can be produced. But as was also noted, the repeatability of enunciable works is not included in Benjamin's "technical reproducibility" model. This sort of reproduction is based on a *physical* matrix, while the enunciable work is produced from an *abstract* matrix. How then can the (repeatable) process of realisation of enunciable works be characterised? How should the issue of fidelity (to the idea) be addressed? Which characteristics of the work should be considered to determine whether it is a "good" or "bad" realisation?

I will not define the process of realisation myself. For that, I shall simply retrieve the model Liz Kotz proposed, not exactly with conceptual art in mind but rather the practices of American art during the 1960s (which were characterised by the use of verbal language). This is a very particular model of "repeatable realisation" which Kotz calls *specification* and which is described and analysed in the book *Words to Be Looked At*, published in 2007[104]. Some of the artistic practices analysed by Kotz can be included in the scope of conceptual art, while others cannot. Despite that discrepancy, I believe that viewing the process of realisation of a work as a process of *specification* is applicable to all conceptual art. Kotz wrote:

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[102] Thomas McEvilley, *The Triumph of Anti-Art: Conceptual Art and Performance Art in the Formation of Post-Modernism*, New York: McPherson, 2005, p. 95

[103] The issue of the "impossibility of transparent language" is recurrent in texts on the analysis of the ways verbal enunciation and photographic representation are used in the framework of conceptual art, instrumentalising them in the search for a supposed "neutrality". In this regard, in addition to Bochner, I could also state the example of authors such as Liz Kotz and the artist Mike Kelly, for whom the "belief" in neutrality is the distinguishing factor between a first generation of conceptual artists – wishing to purge the formal expression of works from any rhetoric – and a second generation – that does not believe in that possibility anymore. Liz Kotz, "A Politics of Representation", in *Words to Be Looked At*, pp. 231-247; Mike Kelly, "Shall We Kill Daddy? [on Douglas Huebler]", in *Foul Perfection: Essays and Criticism*, ed. John C. Welchman, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 2003, pp. 178-193 [originally published in a 1997 Douglas Huebler exhibition catalogue].

[104] Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At*.

> Unlike the photographic logic of original and copy, the relation between a notational system and a realisation is not one of representation or reproduction but of *specification*: the template, schema, or score is usually not considered the locus of the work, but merely a tool to produce it; and while the work must conform to certain specifications or configurations, its production necessarily differs from realisation to realisation. (...) If photography as a means of documentation is so ubiquitous in late 1960s' art, this is not simply due to the proliferation of earthworks, conceptual practices, site-specific projects, and ephemeral realisations but a result of the fact that the work of art has been reconfigured as a specific realisation of a general proposition.[105]

Kotz's acceptation of the term "specification" is very different to Dickie's. For Dickie, to specify is to "state what the work is" or to "award a determined entity the status of art". For Kotz, on the other hand, to specify is to confer a *concrete* nature (which does not necessarily imply *objecthood*) to an otherwise discoursive entity (what I have been referring to as the idea or enunciation). To specify is to concretize, to the extent that the work can be made concrete. One may ask why this question is raised when the enunciation itself is what is being presented but, in this case, the enunciation presented is the *specification* of an idea that consists of "presenting the enunciation of the work as the work itself". Apparently, Kotz does not consider this matter. I will not question the lack of autonomy Kotz awards to the work's enunciation, or return to the discussion as to whether the work can "exist" in its enunciation or not. What is important in this excerpt is the fact that, in it, the enunciation is a *generic* and abstract definition that may be common and serve as a reference for a limited number of *specific* and concrete works. Regarding the multiplicity of specifications that can be generated from a single enunciation, Kotz mentions *One and Three Chairs* as an example. During an exchange of correspondence with Kotz, responding to her view on the process of realisation of the work, Kosuth explains:

> "When you say that a piece is largely re-made in each site what is actually remade is the "form of presentation". The reason to have the "form of presentation" remade at each site is so that the chair (or photograph, table, or other objects used in this series) can be photographed in the exact location where it will be installed in the exhibition. This way the specific conditions, i.e., the wall, floor, lighting, etc., will be correctly incorporated into the photographic component. The date of the "form of presentation" is immaterial because the certificate is the constant."[106]

I would add *Photopath* as an example, a work Victor Burgin enunciated in 1967 and realised in 1969 [115 . 116]. This work consisted in placing 21 full-scale photographs of a paved area (divided into 21 sectors) over that same paved area. The depiction was meticulously superposed in a perfect match to the pavement. Instead of the thing itself, one can observe a representation of that thing – a *trompe l'oeil* – in the exact place where it exists. As Burgin says about this sort of work, "(...) the specific nature of any object formed is largely contingent upon the details of the situation for which it is designed (...)"[107]. This work also begins with a single enunciation and must be remade – in this case, the specificity of the image shown in the

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[105] Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At*, p. 193-194.
[106] Kotz, *Ibidem*, p. 193.
[107] Victor Burgin, "Situational Aesthetics", in Ursula Meyer (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, p. 79 [originally published in *Studio International*, 178, nr. 915, October 1969].

photographs – in every place it is installed. There is no variation in meaning between different specifications of the enunciation.

Both *One and Three Chairs* and *Photopath* are particularly clear examples of variations between one specification and another, because their respective ideas involve an adjustment to the specificity of the context. However, the realisation of a work also admits variations that do not arise from that need for adjustment. As well as being subject to variations in the photograph according to the place where it is presented, *One and Three Chairs* is also realised with several different chairs, but this doesn't result in a change to the work's meaning. Naturally, this is only possible because the matrix of the enunciable work is abstract, not physical. In the context of technical reproducibility, or when faced with a physical matrix, the work's fidelity to that matrix can be defined as a matter of formal and material *coincidence*. Does this mean any chair can be used? Does it not matter? It does matter. The manner in which the work conforms to the enunciation involves certain requirements. More precisely, the work must be a *literal* translation of the idea. However, the meaning of the adjective "literal", when applied to the realisation of enunciable works, is still to be defined.

The literalness of the work of conceptual art is based on two complementary phenomena.

On the one hand, the process of realisation of the work tends not to add data to the idea apart from those that necessarily derive from the circumstances of realisation. The transition from a set of data (abstract entity) to a work with form and / or matter (concrete entity) is direct. In other words, it is a transition centred on the rigour observed when complying with the data and does not aim to infuse the work with any characteristics that derive from the realisation itself. There is no room in the work for any formal or material features that do not strictly comply with the idea[108]. Decisions about form (namely, if applicable, as a "shape"), the materials or the execution do not seek any such mannerism that "artistically enriches" the work. If enunciability is based on the concise nature of the definition of what the work is – excluding, namely, formal intricacies involving more than what is strictly necessary to the idea itself – the introduction of any factors of formal sophistication in the transition to the realisation of the work only results in "morphological noise". One thing is to accept the inevitability of choosing a certain *means* to realise the work and the inevitability of that means adding expression. These are the "inevitabilities" claimed by Bochner. Another thing is to introduce morphological values into the process of realisation of the work other

[108] We don't share Jeff Wall's perspective according to which, for example, "Kosuth (...) presents the vestiges of the instrumentalised "value-free" academic disciplines characteristic of the new American-type universities (empiricist sociology, information theory, positivist language philosophy) in the fashionable forms of 1960s advertising (...). In this sense conceptualism is the *doppelgänger* of Warhol-type "Popism" in its helpless ironic mimicry, not of knowledge, but of the mechanisms of falsification of knowledge, whose despotic and seductive forms of display are copied to make art objects". Complete absence of style is not possible. Style may only be unpretentiously subordinated to the preponderance of the idea. In that sense, the most functional models of communication, such as those of science, become particularly adequate resources. Resorting to such models as a process that fetishes may constitute, from this viewpoint, an abusive interpretation. This perspective by Wall is referred and supported by Peter Osborne and is also very close to the concept of "aesthetic of administration" proposed by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh. All these points of view will be discussed further ahead, in the final part of chapter II-1. See: Jeff Wall, "Dan Graham's Kammerspiel", in *Selected Essays and Interviews*, New York: MoMA, 2007, pp. 31-75 [originally published in *Dan Graham* (exhibition catalogue), Perth: Art Gallery of Western Australia, 1985, pp. 14-40]; Osborne, "Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy", pp. 61-62; Buchloh, "From the Aesthetics of Administration to Institutional Critique".

than those responsible for ensuring the realisation process is *direct*, that is, conceptually rigorous. In view of these assumptions, when images or objects are used, they acquire an ordinary appearance, unpretentious. It is common to resort to generic elements: *objéts-type*, documentary photographs, manual writing or common letterings such as those found in typewritten documents, newspapers, schemes, tables and diagrams, maps, normal sheets of paper or leafs torn out of a note book, photocopies, office supplies such as ring binders, sellotape, millimetre paper, etc. In order to realise *One and Three Chairs*, Kosuth never resorted to chairs with a clear "signature design". Much to the contrary, the several chairs used were quite ordinary. Like other objects used by Kosuth, they are *objét-type*s. Despite possessing the quality that awarded those objects that status, their design does not interfere with acknowledging the fact that it is in fact a chair we have in front of us – as the work's enunciation provides. When questions of compositional nature are raised with regard to some works, subjectivity is avoided through an entirely objective use of modular grids or elementary forms such as squares and cubes. In works of performance art, a number of actions are performed without the need for displaying any signs of virtuosity.

On the other hand, there are no exhaustive enunciations. The realisation of a work inevitably involves making decisions on aspects that are not addressed in the idea. There are always indefinite factors which, without jeopardising the coherence and the meaning of the idea, allow for slightly different versions of the same work to be produced. Although the form is entirely subordinate to the idea, a single idea may lead to different specifications. To say "the work is the literal translation of the idea that defines it" therefore does not mean that there is only *one* literal translation for each idea. There may be a number of them. The literalness with which an *enunciable work of art* corresponds to its respective enunciation, or to the idea underlying it, is not univocal. Provided it is conceptually rigorous, any specification of an idea is valid — a assumption that has already been hinted at in the 12th of LeWitt's "Sentences on Conceptual Art":

> 12. For each work of art that becomes physical there are many variations that do not.[109]

Within this operative context, an idea may be restrictive in the variations it permits for the realisation of the work or leave room for different realisations. Note Weiner's statements. Immediately when he reveals his first statements, in *Statements*, Weiner draws attention to the fact that the rigour with which each idea is defined can vary. From the 24 statements included in the publication, 12 are classified as "general statements" and the other 12 as "specific statements"[110]. With regard to the difference between general and specific statements, Alexander Alberro wrote:

> This distinction between general and specific was made according to the quantified preciseness and degree of detail of the statement. Thus, for example: "a two inch wide one foot deep trench cut across a standard one car driveway; one hole in the

[109] LeWitt, "*Sentences on Conceptual Art*", p.11.
[110] The adjectives "specific" and "generic" as applied to Weiner's work, are used with a different meaning than that given to them by Kosuth. See: Kosuth, *Art after Philosophy*, p. 27.

> ground approximately one foot by one foot by one foot; one gallon water base white paint poured into this hole; one aerosol can of enamel sprayed to conclusion directly upon the floor", are specific statements. On the other hand: "an amount of paint poured directly upon the floor and allowed to dry; a removal to the lathing or support wall of plaster or wall board from a wall; a field cratered by structured simultaneous TNT explosions", are general statements.[111]

The difference between *general* and *specific* is based on the rigour applied when defining each hypothetical work. Weiner's statements will involve the use of less objective language, more "literarily speculative", but the language used in the former – like those of *Statements* – is austere and accurate, both in the general and the specific statements. The difference between them lies solely in the type of information conveyed by language or, more specifically, in the way each enunciation enables, or not, variations in the realisation using the data provided. Either the general statements do not cover all the factors involved in the realisation of the work (like measures, for example) or they address factors that are not predictable. As an example, note the subtle difference between:

- ONE AEROSOL CAN OF ENAMEL SPRAYED TO CONCLUSION DIRECTLY UPON THE FLOOR – a specific statement;
- AN AMOUNT OF PAINT POURED DIRECTLY UPON THE FLOOR AND ALLOWED TO DRY – a general statement.

The blotch of paint resulting from spraying an aerosol can of enamel will be round depending on the distance between the can and the ground, and its colour will increase in intensity during the spraying without spreading significantly. This is more predictable than the spill resulting from pouring paint, the diameter of which will mainly depend on the amount of paint poured – information that the statement does not provide.

The literalness of the conceptual work of art with regard to the idea that defines it therefore lies somewhere between:

- a realisation that does not add any morphological data relevant to the definition of what the work is;
- an idea that is not exhaustive and therefore requires its realisation to add morphological data.

These two assumptions denote that the work's realisation *adds* data to the idea, but that this data is irrelevant. It is put at the idea's service. In that sense, anything that can be considered an expression of style or a formal consequence of authorship is undesirable. As summarised by Piper,

> The function of form is to communicate as much of an idea as possible, to eliminate those aspects of a given set of conditions that are irrelevant to the idea, and to retain only those aspects that clarify the idea. (...) The less a form is intrinsically interesting, the more suitable it is as a communicative medium.[112]

The work's expression is subordinated to the rigour of the realisation of the idea. However, this rigour should not be expected to lead to any sort of formal or technical model. The form will be what results from a

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[111] Alexander Alberro & Alice Zimmerman, "Not How It Should Were It to Be Built but How It Could Were It to Be Built", in AAVV, *Lawrence Weiner*, p. 47.
[112] Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, p. 6.

"definition of what the work is" or from a certain "way to achieve the work". The idea may require several types of realisation, ranging from the most rudimentary to the most sophisticated. Following an idea rigorously, without allowing it to be tainted by the "composition", may mean following factors of indeterminacy[113] and lead to spontaneous or unpredictable forms that reflect those factors of indeterminacy[114] or may require great formal rigour. *Enunciative simplicity is preponderant, rather than tenets of formal simplicity or complexity*.

I shall provide a few examples. A readymade is the response to an enunciation which, instead of involving the creation or production of a new object, consists in using an object that already exists. It is a response to an economical enunciation. The fact that it is an economical enunciation implies that the readymade carries formal "excrescences": parts of the object that are not related in any way to the new artistic function, only to the old function for which they were originally conceived and produced. A readymade is not an *ideal* object; it is *sufficient* to perform a function. The realisation of a readymade, when it is nothing but a simple transportation from one place to another, does not involve "labour" (it represents the labour of others). But a readymade may result from somewhat less simple operations. This is the case of a work that is particularly suitable to this theme, although its author was not a conceptual artist. I refer to the book *a: a novel* by Andy Warhol – a readymade that is not an object. The book is composed of the transcription of audio recordings containing ordinary everyday conversations. With reference to this work, Kotz states that

> (...) it is precisely in the operations of *transcription*, and Warhol's maddening refusal to edit, that Bockris locates Warhol's art – practices that replicate Cage's nonselective acceptance of the results of experimental procedures.[115]

Instead of being understood as an enemy of formal simplicity (in a "less is more" style), the "morphological noise" does exist here if the work's realisation strays from the rigour of the idea and, particularly, if that realisation is tainted by a concern with the "arrangement" of form. Any concern regarding the work's formal or material status could only lead to an effort of sophistication that would be adverse to the work's communicative quality (communicative of the idea). It is in this sense that LeWitt claims that the execution of the work should be perfunctory. And it is also in this sense that one can see that conceptual art operates in a manner opposite to what is known as "design" in the universe of consumerism. Although there are less shallow acceptations of design, it is an activity that often starts off from enunciations with little variation, as for example a chair or the letters of the alphabet, and focuses on the formal possibilities offered by the

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[113] To know more about the precepts pointed out by Goodman regarding a work's fidelity to the notation that defines it and their criticism by Liz Kotz, see: Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At*, p. 271-272n41 and 274-275n73.
[114] Interestingly, in the chapter "From Dada to Data" from his book *Conceptual Art: An American Perspective*, Robert C. Morgan describes the history of enunciable works as the history of enunciations that exploit chance. Morgan, *Conceptual Art*, pp. 1-25.
[115] Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At*, p. 259.

realisation of those enunciations: variations in style. Design is then limited to achieving an *eloquently sophisticated shape* – that calls attention to itself and its sophistication.

Nonetheless, a certain amount of sophistication may be required in the execution. I shall provide another example that, historiographically, does not belong to the "conceptual art" category. When, in 1963, following a suggestion by the gallerist Arturo Schwarz, Duchamp consented to Ulf Linde manufacturing replicas of *Fountain*, the design of the original urinal had to be deduced from Alfred Stieglitz's photographic records so that the copies would resemble the 1917 urinal as much as possible. This involved labour. It even included a project that involved fine-tuning the form. But that was what was necessary in order to *rigorously* realise an enunciation that was no longer "a common urinal signed by the artist and presented in an exhibition context", but rather "a replica (or recreation) of *Fountain* based on a photograph".

There are no *apriorisms* in conceptual art, either regarding the work's formal / material condition (which will be addressed below) or the means used to realise or present it. The *means*, in generic terms, are not relevant for the definition of the category – a category that fits into the scope of visual arts especially because the themes of the works (addressed in chapter II-1) can be associated to the tradition of visual arts.

Can one conclude from this that a conceptual work has no expression? Not at all. All these requirements lead to a very particular expression: literalness. If the execution is rigorous, the work acquires an expression of literalness. It is a *contingent expression that cannot stand on its own but, rather, is subordinate to the protagonism of the idea*. In contrast to what "pure conceptualism" would prescribe, the conceptual work still has to be experienced and still has an expression, but that experience and expression only serve to emphasise the fact that one is before a work with an enunciable constitution – and, by doing so, position the work within the scope of the *discoursive*, where it belongs. The concern with the work's expression – with this particular kind of expression – is illustrated by the following comments made by Weiner during an interview with Buchloh:

> **Buchloh** Initially at least, it seems there was relatively little design work implied in the presentation of the books. The books seem to emphasise neutrality and conceptualist purity, but there is an explicit denial of traditional artistic book design (e. g., typography and other design choices).
> **Weiner** I disagree with that absolutely, totally down the line. Those early manifestations (...) are so highly designed you cannot believe it. I mean, take STATEMENTS: there is a design factor to make it look like a $1.95 book that you would buy. The type-face and the decision to use a typewriter and everything else was a design choice. (...) It was in opposition to what was considered chic design: that you could have a class association with design when design essentially was supposed to cut across class.[116]

The rigour observed in the work's execution translates into *austerity*. The formal qualities of a "good graphic design" are taken from the work (in favour of the commonplace) so that the factors that determine the quality of graphic design are excluded and do not interfere with the interpretation of the work. As I said, this

[116] AAVV, *Lawrence Weiner*, London: Phaidon, 1998, p. 20.

does not mean that the specific graphic appearance of the work goes unnoticed. What is noticed is that it is not this factor that determines the quality of the work. It is quite ordinary in that regard. Conceptual works do not even have the *eloquence* of the commonness typical to pop art. They are simply ordinary. The means are at the service of a purpose that is not formal – *they are at the service of the idea*. Withdrawing the formal eloquence from the work is essential for the work to become transparent in relation to the idea that defines it and so that it can *communicate the fact that it is the realisation of an idea*.

This discussion is being developed without taking into account the difference between works where the idea is expressed through an enunciation and other works where the idea remains concealed, subjacent to the work itself. In fact, I used Kotz's perspective of specification in spite of the fact that the author refers expressly to *enunciations* ("words to be looked at") and not to *ideas*. I did so for two reasons. Firstly, like the enunciation, the idea operates as an abstract entity from which the work is produced as a specification. Secondly, because literalness guarantees access to the idea even in those cases where it is not explicit. These are precisely the cases where the double purpose of literalness becomes clearest: as stated before, (1) to facilitate access to the work's idea and, simultaneously, (2) to allow recognition of the work as enunciable, emphasising the very *existence of the idea*. One could argue that the work's fidelity to its matrix cannot be assessed when the idea is not even provided in an enunciation, since that matrix – the idea – does not exist as a reference. But this is not necessarily the case. Despite its indirect presence and the fact that it can only be achieved through the very work it originated, an idea may actually be more rigorous than an enunciation.

If a conceptual work – that which it is – is economical from the outset due to the necessarily concise nature of the idea (the "conceptual economy" of the work), it is the economy of the realisation that permits it to be recognised as such. The best form is the one that is the *most eloquent in its literalness*. Ultimately, one may ask if an artistic practice such as conceptual art is based on a "rhetoric of literalness" or, in other words, if the "absence of rhetoric" should be considered part of the field of rhetoric, albeit under a separate category. However, this will only be discussed in chapter II-1.

the work as an entity

This first chapter could end here. I believe that the implications of "the work of conceptual art being the literal translation of an idea" have been stated in as far as regards the concrete nature of the work – the final stage of the operating model presented. There is nothing more to add about the fact that *the work is a literal translation of the idea that defines it.* However, after defining the *theoretical conditions for enunciability*, now the work in itself shall be examined. This theme provides an opportunity to clarify the meaning of a term that is often generically associated to conceptual art and, in particular, the concrete nature of the work. I refer to "dematerialization".

In opposition to the stability and autonomy of works which were then considered to be at the heart of the commercialisation of art, several conceptual artists experimented with the production of works that were subversive due to their supposed unmarketability. It is in this context that the term "dematerialization" appeared and became cutting edge, specifically in the process of instituting the category of conceptual art. However, as was mentioned above, its importance does not derive as much from its scientific rigour as it does from the historical role it performed, providing a common classification for works by different artists, all of which sought to downplay the object – the loss of the work's formal and material status. The term dates back to 1968. Its origin is associated to the essential article "The Dematerialization of Art" written by Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler. In a clearly enthusiastic manner, the writers note that:

> As more and more work is designed in the studio but executed elsewhere by professional craftsmen, as the object becomes merely the end product, a number of artists are losing interest in the physical evolution of the work of art. (...) Such a trend appears to be provoking a profound dematerialization of art, especially of art as object, and if it continues to prevail, it may result in the object's becoming wholly obsolete.[117]

This perspective on the future did not come about, but the experiences tending to relativize the value of the object were an essential vector for development of conceptual art; and for this reason the term "dematerialization" was coined. But, as was mentioned above, it lacks conceptual rigour. This fact was mentioned in an immediate reaction to the article by Lippard and Chandler, in a letter sent to the author that explained the reason for its refutation and was titled "Concerning the Article 'The Dematerialization of Art'". It was written by Terry Atkinson, at the time one of the members of the Art & Language collective. Atkinson used definitions of "dematerialization" and "substance" to question Lippard:

> It is more than plain then that when a material entity becomes dematerialized it does not simply become non-visible (as opposed to invisible), it becomes an entity which cannot be perceived by any of our senses. As far as material qualities go it is simply a

[117] Lippard & Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art", p. 46.

> non-entity. Thus it seems to me that if you are talking about art-objects dematerializing, then you would be obliged to talk about objects of which there was now no material trace; if, on the other hand, you are talking or implying, by virtue of the metaphorical licence, that some artists today are using immaterial entities to demonstrate ideas, then you would be talking of ideas that had never had material concretization. It certainly does not follow that because an object is invisible, or is less visible than it was, or less visible that other object, that any process of dematerialization has taken place.[118]

Five years later, in her renowned anthology *Six Years...*, Lippard would not only acknowledge the ambiguity of the term but also publish the letter that Atkinson wrote her. Lippard was a pioneer in the attempt to find a common denominator for a set of artistic practices which appeared in the international scene during the second half of the 1960s and that brought into question the artwork's condition as an object. As Lippard soon realises, this is a context of artistic production where materiality – or questioning the contours of materiality – is a decisive factor.

From a distance, and ignoring the excessive simplicity inherent to this term, "dematerialization" seems to successfully relate to several aspects of conceptual art. On the one hand, the conceptual art category is marked by *discoursiveness*: conceptual works can be enunciated verbally and their theme relates to concepts that can also be verbally assessed. On the other hand, as was seen with regard to several types of idea, the work is often released from the stability and / or the permanence inherent to objects. In conceptual art, there is a great diversity of phenomena related not only to materiality but also to what *the work as an entity* might be.

Now, in conclusion to this chapter, I shall define a reference framework assessing the specificity of a work in view of its relative position towards materiality[119]. For this purpose, I propose to distinguish four options:

A) *reducing the materiality of the work to a purely instrumental condition*. Material entities are produced only strictly to the extent that they are necessary to communicate not only the work's idea but, particularly, the artist's thought (a manifest, thesis, question, etc.).

B) *adopting materiality as a thematic field for experimentalism which, in opposition to the traditional stability of the work of art, explores "new materialities"*. Irrespective of whether the material characteristics of the work are more or less stable, the work of art is principally viewed as a *material* entity.

C) *transcending materiality through the way that the public contacts with the work*. These works and those mentioned in the item above have in common the fact that both adopt materiality as their

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[118] Terry Atkinson, "Concerning the Article 'The Dematerialization of Art'", in Alberro & Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art*, p. 53 [letter written to Lucy Lippard dated 23rd March 1968, first published, partially, in Lippard, *Six Years...*, pp. 43-44].

[119] Proposals for a typological classification of conceptual art works have already been established. They will not be followed here because my aim is to establish a classification *specifically* centered on materiality, but two that are considered particularly important should be mentioned: those of Terry Smith (performance, processual, procedural, propositional) and of Simón Marchán Fiz (linguistic and empirical-medial, each divided into subcategories). Mary Kelly & Terry Smith, "A Conversation about Conceptual Art, Subjectivity and the *Post-Partum Document*", in Alberro & Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art*, p. 450; Simón Marchán Fiz, *Del Arte Objectual al Arte de Concepto: Epílogos sobre la Sensibilidad "Postmoderna"*, Madrid: Ediciones Akal, 1986, pp. 249-271.

theme. However, while the former result from a speculation that never departs from the effectively physical quality of the work, in these materiality is transferred to a fictional or transcendent plane.

D) *departing from the materiality of the work in favour of artistic modes that consist only in actions without a productive purpose*. The work only exists as a set of phenomena or procedures and ceases to exist when these are complete. The work *happens*. After this, all that can exist are the records of the event.

These four options are examined below, one by one, in greater detail, and are illustrated using some of the variants into which each of them branches.

A) *reducing the materiality of the work to a purely instrumental condition*

In this context, to "*instrumentalise* the matter" means using it mainly in view of the communicative function of the work of art. The matter and the form given to that matter are therefore subject to parameters that, above all, regard the efficacy of the communication they convey. The *instrumentalisation* can be focused in two ways: A.1) the characteristics of the work itself; A.2) the way in which the work is presented to the public.

A.1) In as far as concerns the configuration of the work, **resorting to more elementary and disaffected means of communication in order to construct a "thesis" or examine a "problem" regarding artistic practices**. Elements of a documental nature are succinctly presented, such as texts, numbers, measurements, diagrams, photocopies, highly objective photographs, simple objects used for exemplifying things, etc. These are ordinary elements, appropriate for research and teaching[120], conforming to formal rules seeking *function*. They are what they need to be. It would be possible to establish a difference between resorting to bi-dimensional entities (i.e. everything that is usually written on paper) and tri-dimensional entities (objects). One might perhaps perceive that difference according to categories such as painting and sculpture. But a distinction along these lines would be alien to the scope of conceptual art. As mentioned earlier, conceptual art practices are *post-media*: in these, any means of configuring the work can be used indifferently. Communication is the main goal and, for this, the means that best serve each purpose are employed, without predefined restrictions. Although for quite distinct purposes, the matter is used in the same way as a given subject would be presented in a classroom. Moreover, under these circumstances no differences are established between the validity of presenting a text, photographs, diagrams, etc. and the validity of using objects as an example, sample, reference, etc. By the same token, it is equally valid to draw or write on the board or, alternatively, to project a text or a drawing. The means are all the better when they best serve, in this case, the purpose of teaching.

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[120] Morgan lists: "(1) photographs, (2) maps, (3) printed text, (4) diagrams, (5) handwritten or drawn notations, (6) natural specimens, (7) found, manufactured or hand-built objects, and (8) legal certificates and papers". Morgan, *Conceptual Art*, p. 28.

One can employ a work by Hans Haacke as an example: *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of 1 May 1971* [147]. This work is composed of a series of 142 reports and respective photographs of buildings which, at the time, were successively resold within a certain economic group – the largest real-estate owner in New York, led by Harry Shapolsky – and, through this process, were left to deliberate degradation. Information on the economic activity of the group and the distribution of the real-estate in the city was presented with the reports on show.

Curiously, this role given to materiality is common to the contrasting positions of Kosuth and Bochner discussed above. Both instrumentalise the matter. From this specific point of view, the only thing that separates the two artists is the fact that Kosuth excludes matter from the scope of his concerns and Bochner includes it in his works as a "reality counterpoint" to abstract systems. While Kosuth promotes a radical separation between *means* (the work as material manifestation) and *ends* (conceptual considerations on art), Bochner operates on the basis of this same separation but complexifies it, adopting the *means* (materiality) also as an *end* (theme) in its own right. This is why Kosuth's works appear more refined, similarly to printed pages (or sometimes actually as printed pages), while Bochner's, invoking the "things in themselves", have a more spontaneous appearance, similar to an improvised explanation in a classroom with "whatever's at hand" [111 . 124]. The instrumentalisation promoted by the members of the Art & Language collective can be considered more radical than both of these. Comparing it to Kosuth, Osborne stated:

> If Kosuth conceived art philosophically as propositional in nature, he nonetheless continued to produce object-instantiated work as the means for the communication of his propositions. Art & Language took a step back, withdrawing to the immanent investigation of the logical structure of language itself.[121]

In either case, from the perspective of formal expression, the works of this type can be characterised as sharing what Lippard calls "**(...)** an informational, documentary idiom **(...)**" in the postface to *Six Years...*[122]. This "reduction to information" may be related to the fact that it is also in the scope of conceptual art that some of the first artistic experiments including films and computing are produced. (That which connects conceptual "reduction to information" to its historical context – and which includes, for example, the fact that one of the most important exhibitions in the formation of conceptual art was titled *Information*[123] – shall be examined in chapter II-1.)

A.2) The instrumentalisation of the matter of the work may also allow **exploring the way in which information is displayed to the public**. The aim is to facilitate "reaching the public" by exploring the

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[121] Osborne, "Conceptual Art and / as Philosophy", p. 62.
[122] Lippard, *Six Years...*, p. 263.
[123] Kynaston L. McShine (ed.), *Information* (exhibition catalogue), New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1970.

work's communication supports ("supports" understood as the material entity on which the work is communicated, or more generally, the means by which it is communicated). To a large extent, the diversity of supports that proliferate in conceptual art seeks to facilitate, or democratise, access to art. Weiner has already been mentioned as an example, abandoning the production of "finished works" and starting to present enunciations for political reasons, among others. Modes of artistic communication are sought out for their "lightness", immediacy or ease. Recent or past, the supports used for daily communication are appropriated by artistic communication. One could say that art "leeches" pre-existing or commonly used communication devices, in this way creating contexts for an encounter between the work and the public that are an alternative to galleries and museums: newspapers, magazines, television, advertising panels in all sorts of environments (public areas, transports, roadsides,...), indoor or outdoor walls, mail, telegrams, books, catalogues, photocopies, etc. Kosuth, for example, published a version of his enlarged, "exhibition-size" dictionary definitions as common newspaper advertisements. He explains that:

> This way the immateriality of the work is stressed and any possible connections to painting are severed. The new work is not connected with a precious object – it's accessible to as many people as are interested – having nothing to do with architecture; it can be brought into the home or museum, but wasn't made with either in mind; it can be dealt with by being torn out of its publication and inserted into a notebook or stapled to the wall – or not torn out at all – but any such decision is unrelated to art. My role as an artist ends with the work's publication.[124]

"Inserções em Circuitos Ideológicos: Projeto Coca-Cola", by Cildo Meireles (1970) is another particularly renowned work within this field [143]. This Brazilian artist collects Coca-Cola bottles (that are reused by the company), adding inscriptions such as "yankees, go home!" and puts them back into the market. In this strategy, Alberro sees an inversion of the operative logic of the readymade:

> Instead of inserting the commodity object into the space of the gallery, the work returned the Coca-Cola bottles to their original system of circulation – albeit in a radically altered form. As such, the work not only attempts an ambitiously egalitarian form of distribution, but also critiques the imperialism of advanced capitalism that Coca-Cola represented.[125]

B) adopting materiality as a thematic field for experimentalism which, in opposition to the traditional stability of the work of art, explores "new materialities"

In these experiments, one starts off from the assumption that the material expression of a work can be an end in itself. Materiality is the object of self-reflection. As has already been mentioned, this assumption is contrary to restrictive convictions such as those of Kosuth, for whom the experiments around the materiality of the work are systematically excluded from the scope of "conceptual art".

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[124] Joseph Kosuth, in Siegelaub (ed.), *January 5 – 31, 1969*, unnumbered.
[125] Alexander Alberro, "Reconsidering Conceptual Art", in Alberro & Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art*, p. xxvii-xxviii.

Despite being taken as a theme in itself, materiality is not a factor of valuation of the work in its traditional acceptation, as a "plastic" value. Instead it becomes the object of laboratory experimentation that, to the extent that it tests the limits of the *reduction* of the matter of the work, can be identified with the term "dematerialization". I propose to define two modes of operating in that sense. B.1) In as far as concerns the condition of *objecthood* of the work, a loss of the autonomy tends to occur, or a dilution of the body of the work through several levels of dependence of the context in which it is inserted. B.2) In as far as concerns the *physical* condition of the work, there is a trend towards the volatility of its body, through several levels of loss of solidity and stability. In either of these possibilities, the paradigm inherent to speculation is the physical absence of the work. Either through dilution in the specific context, or the volatility of the matter, the work tends towards the limit of its physical existence; towards nonexistence. It tends towards *nothingness*. The work offers the experience of absence.

B.1) Putting aside the autonomy typical of objects, **the material existence of the work is made to depend on the context in which it is found**. This is what occurs in many of the works enunciated by Weiner in his statements. Taking these as reference, I can establish a typological sampling organised in a manner whereby it starts with an autonomous work and evolves in the direction of increasingly less autonomous works, i.e. increasingly tending towards being nothing. From this viewpoint, it is possible to view the entities that Wiener enunciates as:

- objects, that is, formally autonomous and materially stable entities. This is the scope in which the term "piece" used by Weiner in his *statement of intent* can be understood in its more traditional acceptation – the same acceptation that is applied to "sculptures" in the orthodox sense. An example of this type of statements is provided by MANY COLORED OBJECTS PLACED SIDE BY SIDE TO FORM A ROW OF MANY COLORED OBJECTS[126]. The "works that are objects" are included here as a "zero example", still outside the scope of dilution of autonomy, but in relation to which the loss may be referenced.
- *the result of interventions that use context as their support much as painting takes the canvas as support*, or in the same manner that Weiner's own verbal statements have certain surfaces (papers, partitions, walls, etc.) as a support. ONE 14 OZ. AEROSOL CAN ENAMEL SPRAYED TO CONCLUSION DIRECTLY UPON THE FLOOR can also be included in this category;
- the *result of interventions transforming the three dimensional configuration of a given physical context*. The existence of these interventions depends entirely on their context, without which they would not be able to leave their mark on the transformational action. Despite being formally stable, and for all that their form might be precise, these works, however, do not have formal autonomy. This

[126] Since it dates back to 1979, this statement not only occurred quite a while later than *Statements*, during a stage of Weiner's work with a historical context that is no longer usually identified with conceptual art. However, because the artistic questions that the statement places are similar to the statements in the context of conceptual art, I do not believe that using it as an example perverts the coherence of the argument that is being made here.

is what occurs with A 36" x 36" REMOVAL TO THE LATHING OR SUPPORT WALL OF PLASTER OR WALL BOARD FROM A WALL[127] [118 . 119 . 120].

- *the result of interventions in every way similar to those described above, but with a consistency that is materially unstable or fugacious*. This is the case with ONE QUART HEAVY GRADE MOTOR OIL POURED INTO THE GULF STREAM, de 1969[128]. In this item, the loss of autonomy of the work can be confused with the loss of stability referred to in paragraph B.2).

(These strategies are recurrent in the so-called *land art*.)

B.2) In the experiments with volatility, the work is viewed according to factors that lie within the field of physics, such as the behaviour, state or appearance of matter. **The substance of the work of art is *reduced* to its minimum level of stability and / or visibility**. Therefore these include both "**(...)** works in which things happen to things **(...)**"[129] (works that are undergoing transformation), and works made of a matter that is not quite perceptible. I once again propose a typological sampling ranging from the less volatile works to the most volatile works, progressively moving towards nothingness. I shall start by referring to works by Hans Haacke.

- *formally autonomous but unstable works*

  Condensation Cube [130] is a work installed in a variety of spaces between 1963 and 1965. It consists of a Plexiglas box inside which a small portion of water is under a continuous process of evaporation / condensation – a process intensified by outside variations of temperature and according to which the glass sides vary in transparency / opacity. By relativizing the value of the work's physical stability and because it implies the exhibition space in its own characteristics, *Condensation Cube* is best enunciated by the physical phenomenon it contains than by its form. As a material entity, it is closer to a system or a device than a form. Haacke explains:

> The process of condensation does not end. The box has a constantly but slowly changing appearance which never repeats itself. The conditions are comparable to a living organism which reacts in a flexible manner to its surroundings. The image of condensation cannot be precisely predicted. It is changing freely, bound only by statistical limits. I like this freedom.[130]

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[127] With regard to his work *Double Negative* (1969) – a work in which a similar strategy is applied, but at a spectacular scale – Michael Heizer states: "In order to create this sculpture material was removed rather than accumulated. (...) There is nothing there, yet it is still a sculpture". Julia Brown, interview to Michael Heizer, in Julia Brown (ed.), *Michael Heizer: Sculpture in Reverse* (exhibition catalogue), Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984, pp. 15-16.

[128] This work is included among a set of five works conceived for an exhibition at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in 1969. It was executed by a group of local fishermen.

[129] Godfrey, *Conceptual Art*, p. 161.

[130] Hans Haacke, October 1965, in Matthias Flügge & Robert Fleck (eds.), *Hans Haacke: For Real: Works 1959-2006* (exhibition catalogue), Düsseldorf: Richter Verlag, 2006 p.85.

- *works without formal autonomy or stability*

  Water in Wind [131] is an installation performed on the roof of a building in East Houston Street, New York in 1968. It consists of clouds of sprayed water varying in form according to the direction and intensity of the wind.

- *works that are displays of energy*

  High Voltage Discharge Travelling [132] is a work that Haacke exhibits for the first time in 1968. Two electrical conduction wires are installed in parallel inside a long glass tube. A short circuit creates a spark between these wires which is put into continuous activity between the extremities of the installation. It could be said that the work of art is the moving spark and that the machinery is merely the device that brings it about.

- *works which cannot be seen because they are made with invisible materials*

  Recording of Climate in Art Exhibition [133] is a work presented by Haacke, namely in the exhibition *Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects*, commissioned by Kosuth in New York in 1970[131]. The work consists in the simple exhibition of a thermograph, a barograph and a hydrograph – devices normally used in museums in order to register variations in indoor temperature, pressure and humidity. These devices are not autonomous as a work. They are first and foremost an indicator: a device that makes the existence of a mass of air evident.

Robert Barry – who, like Kosuth and Weiner, was part of the group promoted by Siegelaub – is another artist who, around 1968, starts to perform volatile works, using materials such as carrier waves, ultrasounds, microwaves, electromagnetic energy fields, radioactive substances and inert gases. During an interview held in 1969, Barry explained that he reached these materials as the result of an effective "dematerialization" process:

> Q: How did you arrive at the kind of work you are now doing?
> BARRY: (...) Color became arbitrary. I started using thin transparent nylon monofilament. Eventually the wire became so thin that it was virtually invisible. This led to my use of a material which is invisible, or at least not perceivable in a traditional way. Although this poses problems, it also presents endless possibilities. It was at this point that I discarded the idea that art is necessarily something to look at.
> Q: If your work is not perceivable, how does anyone deal with it or even know of its existence?
> BARRY: I'm not only questioning the limits of our perception, but the actual nature of perception.[132]

It is at this time that Barry produces a set of works called *Inert Gas Series* [134 . 135],consisting in opening bottles outdoors, each bottle with a different inert gas. One of the works in this series, integrated in the exhibition "March 1969" organised by Seth Siegelaub, was enunciated in the respective catalogue in the following manner:

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[131] Donald Karshan (ed.), *Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects* (exhibition catalogue), New York: The New York Cultural Center, 1970.
[132] Rose, "Four Interviews", p. 141.

Description: Sometime during the morning of March 5, 1969, two cubic feet of Helium will be released into the atmosphere.[133]

This release of helium called *Inert Gas Series: Helium (2 cubic feet)* took place in a deserted area nearby and was not intended to be a public event. The work is not only invisible, because the helium released from the bottle is imperceptible, but also performed at a remote location, too distant to be witnessed by an audience. This materially invisible work is also inaccessible. It is absent. It is noticed only through its enunciation or through photographs that register the presence of the bottle in the desert.

The exploration of these limits to the substance of the work, when merely giving rise to events (in other words, "things that happen"), takes up an ambiguous position in the classification I propose here for abandoning the objecthood of the work of art. The only reason I do not classify this work as an action [paragraph D) of this classification] is because it is not limited to the release of helium in itself and, according to the intentions of the artist, the helium released becomes *the* work. Thus, it continues to exist.

C) transcending materiality through the way that the public contacts with the work

Both the instrumentalisation of the matter described in paragraph A) and the loss of autonomy and destabilisation of the work described in paragraph B), ultimately tend towards the absence of the work – towards nothingness. But total absence of the work is not possible. Something has to be presented to the public so that, at the least, the public is informed of the work. The works included in this paragraph C) focus on the communication of the existence – or, eventually, the characteristics – of the work. *It operates at the level of interfaces for contact with the (supposed) work.* Within this scope, I propose to distinguish between two possibilities: C.1) putting the public in imminent contact with a specific work, but creating some type of anomaly in relation to that contact; C.2) start off from the principle that the work does not have a concrete existence, and simply communicate its enunciation.

C.1) Despite existing (or being supposed to exist) in the plane of the real, **a practical impediment is created in contacting the work**. The work operates at the level of its own *accessibility*. Starting off from situations in which the work is "just a stone's throw away" and evolving in the sense that the work becomes increasingly distant, the following possibilities can be mentioned:

- *accessible works but with content that is not accessible*

  To a certain extent, this strategy of inaccessibility can be said to originate from the monochromatic paintings experimented during the 1950s by artists such as Ad Reinhardt, Yves Klein and Robert Rauschenberg (following on from Malevich and Rodchenko of the Russian / Soviet avant-garde). These canvasses, painted entirely in a single colour are works in which the traditional "theme" is

[133] Robert Barry, in Seth Siegelaub (ed.), *March 1969* (exhibition catalogue), New York: Seth Siegelaub, 1969, day 5 of the March calendar.

absent (because it has not been painted) or *hidden* (because it is covered by a layer of paint)[134]. In 1953, Rauschenberg makes this operating strategy explicit when he calls a work *Erased De Kooning Drawing* [136]. In this way, the monochromatic surface acquires a meaning that results from an *enunciation* – a fact that approximates it to the conceptual universe – and, in this way, the public is confronted with the fact that they are being denied access to a supposed work. The work presented results from the erasure of another. The surface is empty once again (which places the erased work in the plane of the unachievable), but this void is not pure. It is the result of an *end*. A similar strategy is used in *Secret Painting*, a work by the Art & Language collective from 1968 [137]. The following information is provided next to the canvas painted in black:

> The content of this painting is invisible; the character and dimension of the content are to be kept permanently secret, known only to the artist.

Even if fictional, it is offered as evidence of the existence of a certain content, as is clear in the presentation of a concrete entity on which that content supposedly existed. Something similar happens in a work by Marcel Broodthaers which is called *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (A throw of the dice will never abolish chance) and is dated 1969 [138]. The title comes from a poem by Mallarmé in which the words, instead of following a traditional syntactic combination, are spread over the pages in an apparently random manner, creating free possibilities for their association by the reader. Broodthaers recreates that book maintaining the diffusion of words on each page, but replacing those words with black bars. In this way, only abstract graphical elements remain, underscoring the disposition of the words in the original poem. The compositional effect remains, emphasised in the Broodthaers' book due to the fact that the pages are transparent. The words (which, even more than images, are usually associated to the production of meanings) cannot be read. They remain hidden.

- *accessible works but with transcendent materiality*

The presence of a prosaically concrete object can be made relative by an enunciation that confers the materiality of that object a transcendent character. This is what occurs in a work that Barry conceives for a publication – number 6 of the magazine *0 TO 9*, dated July 1969. The reason for the work using that support is to facilitate the encounter between art and the public, but this is not why it is mentioned here. Particularly important is the manner in which materiality is dealt with in the integration of the work – strictly speaking, these are two complementary works – inside the magazine. Two enunciations are presented in the index: *The Space Between Pages 29 & 30* and *The Space Between Pages 74 & 75*. The first refers to two pages that are both sides of the same leaf.

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[134] See: Bruno Latour & Peter Webel (eds.), *Iconoclash: Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion and Art*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 2003.

Read in a purely material perspective, the work is based on the thickness of the paper. Naturally, the term "space" used by Barry is not limited to the thickness of the paper. The interval between the two pages has to be scrutinised beyond the sequential manner that the contents of this, or any other publication, are organised. The second enunciation refers to a different situation. Despite the fact that they are two consecutive pages, in effect they are divided by the inner area of the doubled sheet that serves as a support for both, as can be seen in an edition where the leaves of a book are still joined together and uncut. A pocket is created, an interval between the pages, corresponding to a space with an effectively material existence. By creating these two distinct but clearly related situations, this dual work by Barry operates between, on the one hand, the characteristics of the publication as an object (support for its respective contents) and, on the other, the transcendent use of the numeric paging system. The work can be read, as Rorimer states, "(...) in terms of material reality and as an abstract idea simultaneously"[135].

- *works that supposedly existed, but which can only be accessed through evidence*

In 1969, John Baldessari wrote a text for the exhibition *Konzeption/Conception* with the title "The world has too much art – I have made too many objects – what to do?" In order to solve the problem, Baldessari enunciates:

> (...) With this Project I will have all of my accumulated paintings cremated by a mortuary. The container of ashes will be interred inside a wall of the Jewish Museum. For the length of the show, there will be a commemorative plaque on the wall behind which the ashes are located. It is a reductive, recycling piece. I consider all these paintings a body of work in the real sense of the word. Will I save my life by losing it? Will a Phoenix arise from the ashes? Will the paintings having become dust become art materials again? I don't know, but I feel better.[136]

After promoting a one day sale in his atelier, Baldessari carried out this enunciation. He called it *Cremation Project, July 24, 1970* [139]. The project, including photographic documentation, a bronze plaque and an urn with ashes, was presented at the exhibition *Software*, at the Jewish Museum in New York, in September 1970. Under these circumstances, if it makes sense to consider all of these evidence of the burnt works (and not just the action of burning them), Baldessari presents physical evidence of the existence of a set of works, even if they are no longer accessible.

- *works that supposedly exist, but which cannot be accessed*

The work is maintained out of public's reach although its existence is a presupposition. An example of this procedure is *Closed Gallery Piece*, a work that Barry produces repeatedly between 1969 and 1970, at galleries in Los Angeles, Turin and Amsterdam [140 . 141]. It is, supposedly, an individual exhibition of the artist. However, at the same time as this exhibition is announced by mail, indicating

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[135] Rorimer, *New Art in the 60s and 70s*, p. 88.
[136] John Baldessari, "Cremation Piece, June 1969", in Ursula Meyer (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, p. 32.

a gallery and the dates it will be open to the public, it is also announced that during that exact same period the gallery will be closed. The same message is placed at the entrance to the gallery itself. There is no need to presume that Barry goes to the trouble to prepare an exhibition at the gallery, or that he wishes that the public believe that he does so. The situation created is sufficient to trigger the sense of the work: the inner space of the gallery exists as a mental construction and, in that way, it is evident that it exists as a mental construction.

C.2) The operating strategies I mentioned before presuppose the work has or had some sort of physical existence. However, the public's contact with the work may consist of a purely fictional speculation about the constitution of the latter. To go one step further, one may dispense with any reference to a particular work (a work that is independent from the act of communicating it) and consider that communication reaches the status of artwork in its own right. **One considers that the work consists in the communication itself**. I will state a few examples, starting with those that are most dependent on a supposedly referred entity (the referent) and finishing with works that already are mostly performance acts of communication.

- *works that are enunciated in writing*

  These are works that do not exist materially. They only reach the public through the written communication of their characteristics. Although the materiality of the enunciated work remains in the realm of fiction, there is a material element that supports the communication of the enunciation, such as printed pages or walls. With regard to support, that said before, also regarding supports, in relation to the instrumentalisation of the matter, is equally applicable. Weiner's statements illustrate this form of action, if viewed as a means of making the enunciated work present – its referent.

- *works composed of verbal matter*

  Weiner's statements can also serve as an example for this category if they are viewed as works in their own right and not as signifiers subordinate to a referent. In that case, verbal language no longer acts as a vehicle for communicating a non-verbal work and becomes, itself, subject-matter of the visual arts. In its evocative capacity, Weiner's statements may in this way be considered "sculpture with the abstraction of literature", autonomous with regard to their support, just like a text. With respect to this aspect of Weiner's work, Anne Rorimer wrote:

  > His work utilizes language as it is; that is, not in predetermined association with a material support or contextual framework. The thematic content of individual works derives solely from the import of the language employed, while presentational means and contextual placement play crucial, yet separate, roles. Embodied in language, Weiner's work is not confined in traditional manner to an existence in one place or time. Taking the form of linguistic construction, it is to

> be understood as sculpture. These "sculptures" are peripatetic[137] and infinitely multivalent in terms of how, when, and where they are shown.[138]

It is due to their condition as "peripatetic sculptures" that Weiner's statements may become progressively literary. In Weiner's first statements, like those presented in *Statements*, language is used functionally with the purpose of communicating what the work is. Distinction is made only between specific and general statements according the degree of rigour with which the referent (the hypothetical work) is enunciated. After that, in openly speculative statements, the lack of rigour in the work's definition is explored. Language stops being transparent regarding the enunciated work. It now offers resistance to the flow of the words presented for a hypothetical work. It does not define – it evokes. It becomes by itself a territory of *poetic* effect[139]. As mentioned, one goes from *referent* to *meaning*. That is what can in found in statements such as:

- SOMETHING OLD SOMETHING NEW SOMETHING BORROWED SOMETHING BLUE (1970) [151]. This famous expression has its origin in the Victorian era. It lists, according to the superstition, the elements a bride must include in her attire in order for her marriage to be a happy one.
- AND THEN THERE WERE NONE (1970), mentioned before.

The limit for speculation lies in the fact that the statements never fail to make reference to a *material* and, in that sense, *concrete* entity. As Anne Rorimer puts it:

> Not so much interested in the vagaries of language for their own sake, Weiner takes full advantage of whatever semantic modes might be applicable to envisaging that which is grounded in, but not bounded by, material reality.[140]

Just as in statements – a way of making "sculpture" present – words fill the place traditionally occupied by the sculpture-object to be perceived, there is a possibility that Weiner could use "semantic modes" as a means to invent sculptural modes, in other words, means of making "sculpture" present. Barry also resorts to language as a means to refer to entities that are not present in a speculative way. In 1969, he defined a work as

> All the things I know
> but of which I am not
> at the moment thinking –
> 1:36 PM: June 15, 1969[141]

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[137] Peripatetic sculptures: like Aristotle's' lessons, they are performed while moving, without the heavy immobility of objects.
[138] *Rorimer, New Art in the 60s and 70s, p. 76-77.*
[139] When Weiner's statements stop being literal, the subjectivity of authorship returns to form ("literary form", in this specific case) and its symbolic capacity. When that happens, although Weiner's work continues to explore an operating quality so typical of conceptual art as enunciability, without it ceases to be *strictly* conceptual. One may say these last statements are less conceptual than the first in the sense that, in them, the focus of authorship returns to form and its symbolic capacity, that is, it returns to the traditional protocol of signification.
[140] Rorimer, *New Art in the 60s and 70s*, p. 83.
[141] Robert Barry, "All the Things I know...", in Ellen Seifermann & Beat Wismer (eds.), *Some Places to Which We Can Come: Robert Barry*

- *works made of oral matter*

Although Weiner's statements are inscribed in materially stable supports, therefore acquiring a visual dimension as enunciations, the same cannot be said about Ian Wilson's works, where the artist just *talks*. When referring to this suppression of the material support of artistic communication, Wilson stated:

> I present oral communication as an object, (...) all art is information and communication. I've chosen to speak rather than sculpt. I've freed art from a specific place. It's now possible for everyone. I'm diametrically opposed to the precious object. My art is not visual, but visualized.[142]

In this case, it becomes evident that more than "communication *of* the work", this is about "communication *as* the work". The objective of communicating is met through a performance act. On this theme, Wilson stated, during a conversation with Barry:

> RB: Is oral communication just language?
> IW: No. Obviously not just language.
> RB: Is it action?
> IW: Language could be action, I suppose. Language is the grammar of behavior.[143]

Once again, this is a path leading to "work as action" which will be addressed below, in item D).

In 1969 Barry proposed a work to be defined collectively and kept a secret by the group, thus combining the "work as oral communication" with unavailability. This proposition was made to a group of art school students:

> The students will gather together in a group and decide on a single common idea. The ideas can be of any nature, simple or complex. This idea will be known only to the members of the group. You or I will not know it. The piece will remain in existence as long as the idea remains in the confines of the group. If just one student unknown to anyone else and at any time, informs someone outside the group the piece will cease to exist. It may exist for a few seconds or it may go on indefinitely, depending on the human nature of the participating students. We may never know when or if the piece comes to an end.[144]

- *works communicated in a transcendent manner*

Also during 1969, Barry proposed to employ telepathy to communicate a work. When writing about this *Telepathic Piece*, Barry announces in the exhibition catalogue, in brackets:

Works 1963 to 1975 (exhibition catalogue), Bielefeld: Kerber Verlag, 2003, p. 31 [originally published in: Lucy Lippard, *Changing: Essays in Art Criticism*, New York: Dutton, 1971, p. 297]. Dickie considers this work representative of conceptual art because, from his point of view, that category is defined by the suppression of the artifact and the exclusive recourse to "simple specification". See: Dickie, "A Teoria Institucional da Arte", p. 133-137.

[142] Ian Wilson, in Karshan (ed.), *Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects*, p. 33.

[143] "Ian Wilson and Robert Barry on Oral Communication, July, 1970, Bronx, N.Y." (recorded conversation), in Lippard, *Six Years...*, p. 182.

[144] Robert Barry, "A Work Submitted to Projects Class, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Fall 1969", in Seifermann & Wismer (eds.), *Some Places to Which We Can Come*, p. 93.

> [During the exhibition I will try to communicate telepathically a work of art, the nature of which is a series of thoughts that are not applicable to language or image.][145]

The only thing keeping this example (and the secret kept between students according to Barry's instructions or Wilson's spoken works) from being included in item D) is the fact that the action in it does not preclude the possibility of a referent.

D) departing from the materiality of the work in favour of artistic modes that consist only in actions without a productive purpose.

As I have said, several of the operative strategies in conceptual art tend to depart from the *production* of a work and be limited to the execution of an *action*. One acts instead of producing. This happens namely during processes of volatilisation of the work's matter, when the work's definition takes up a fictional dimension, or when exploring artistic communication modes that do not rely on any material support. The works I state next are actions or events. They differ from all the previous works due to their self-sufficiency: they do not make reference to any external entities, they are not intended to create a work that lasts beyond its actual duration, and they do not have artistic communication mechanisms as their theme. The "works where things happen to things are replaced by the *event* itself. This way the work acquires the nature of pure performance and a duration that is limited in time, not as a vicissitude but rather as a distinctive feature. In order to illustrate what these action-works can be, I propose we consider the agent (*what* or *who* acts) as the distinctive factor between three categories: D.1) events carried out by devices; D.2) actions performed by the artist; D.3) actions performed by the receivers of the work.

D.1) events carried out by devices

The work consists of an on-going event, while it is taking place. An example of this would be *Sound of Ice Melting* Paul Kos exhibited in 1970 in S. Francisco, at the opening of the art gallery *Museum of Conceptual Art* [142]. Two ice cubes, 11 kg each, are placed on the gallery floor and left to melt. The sounds resulting from that melting process are captured by a set of 8 microphones and played at a significantly higher volume. Unlike what happened, for example, with the helium released by Barry, this work does not endure in the water that results from defrosting. The amount of helium continues to exist and move, even if intangibly, and Barry considers it to be a work with infinite duration. Defrosting, however, comes to an end: the moment when there is no more ice and only water remains. The work is the defrosting process itself – a performance process as revealed by the amplification of the sounds produced.

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[145] Robert Barry, "Telepathic Piece", in Seifermann & Wismer (eds.), *Some Places to Which We Can Come*, p. 105 [originally published in: *Simon Fraser Exhibition* (exhibition catalogue), Vancouver: Simon Fraser University, 1969].

D.2) actions performed by the artist

The work results from the adoption of the artist's body as the work's matter[146]. An example of this: *Following Piece* is the title of a work Vito Acconci performed in New York, in 1969, during 23 days [106 . 107]. Each day Acconci would randomly choose a person walking in the street and follow them until the moment they entered a private space. The action was documented, both through black and white pictures and by registering the steps taken by each person he followed, but the work itself consists in Acconci's daily activity.

D.3) actions performed by the receivers of the work

The work results from the actions carried out by its receivers who therefore have an active role. This is the case of *MoMA Poll*, a work by Haacke from 1970 [146]. It is effectively a voting booth, installed in a museum room in New York, in which the public reveals its standpoint regarding the re-election of the governor Nelson Rockefeller by choosing one of two transparent urns into which they would put a small piece of paper handed out to them at the entrance and coloured according to the social profile of each visitor. A former director of the museum and currently a member of its board of trustees, the governor had recently taken a neutral stand towards Nixon's policy on Indochina.

All these works are radically ephemeral. After their conclusion, the leftovers may eventually still survive, such as Haacke's urns filled with votes, or the water that results from the defrosting mounted by Kos. But they are not to be confused with the work. The only things that may reveal the existence of the work are either its enunciation (which exists in a potential state and does not depend on a specific realisation), or its record (which is archive material). As Siegelaub notes,

> Until 1967, the problems of exhibition of art were quite clear, because at that time the "art" of art and the "presentation" of art were coincident. When a painting was hung, all the necessary intrinsic art information was there. But gradually there developed an "art" which didn't need to be hung. An art wherein the problem of presentation paralleled one of the problems previously involved in the making and exhibition of a painting: i.e., *to make someone else aware that the artist had done anything at all*. Because the work was not visual in nature, it did not require the traditional means of exhibition but a means that would present the intrinsic ideas of the art.[147]

The records that inform of the actions possess a purely instrumental materiality and, to that extent, are similar to the works examined in item A). The "idiom of information, of documentary" to which Lippard refers can therefore be used for several different purposes though maintaining their characteristic appearance. Therefore, in the universe of conceptual art, the following should not be confused:

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[146] The "work of art as an event" is a theme involving ambiguities the discussion of which does not lie within the scope of this dissertation. One may argue that every work resulting from a "process" may be interpreted, not as an end in itself, but rather as an outcome, an account, an action – or *event* – that in fact constitutes the work's purpose or the work itself. The same can be said about a readymade which, according to Duchamp's statements, is also the account of an event: that of an encounter performed by the artist.

[147] Siegelaub, "On Exhibitions and The World at Large", p. 167-168.

- documents that serve to present data of a purely theoretical nature;
- documents that serve to enunciate works;
- documents that serve to document the existence of ephemeral works[148]

A) instrumentalise materiality – *the work as a construction of discourse*
- A.1) "idiom of information, of documentary"
- A.2) supports in their social dimension

B) laboratory materiality – *the work as a sample*
- B.1) dilution in the context
  - objects
  - interventions that use the context as a support
  - stable context-transforming interventions
  - volatile context-transforming interventions
- B.2) volatilisation
  - works that are formally autonomous but unstable
  - works that are neither formally autonomous nor stable
  - works that are displays of energy
  - works performed with invisible materials

C) fictional materiality – *the work as a communication interface*
- C.1) works that focus on accessibility to the work
  - accessible works but with content that is not accessible
  - accessible works but with transcendent materiality
  - works that supposedly existed, but which can only be accessed through evidence
  - works that supposedly exist, but which cannot be accessed
- C.2) works that focus on their own communication
  - works that are enunciated in writing
  - works composed of verbal matter
  - works made of oral matter
  - works communicated in a transcendent manner

D) action – *the work as a life experience*
- D.1) events carried out by devices
- D.2) actions performed by the artist
- D.3) actions performed by the receivers of the work

In this classification, the four main options are the most important to keep in mind; the remaining items and the different subgroups into which they branch do not result from an exhaustive analysis of the universe of conceptual works and serve mainly as examples. Through any one of the four paths described, conceptual art departs from the work valued as an object, due to its formal characteristics. The object "disappears", in favour of:

- the communication or triggering of discourse [A)];

[148] With regard to the possible ambiguities between "documentation *around* the work of art" and "documentation *as* work of art" see the section "Problems with Documentation" in Morgan, *Conceptual Art*, pp. 38-47.

- the possibility of imponderable art [B) and C)];
- extension of visual arts to pure action [D)].

The exhibition organised by Siegelaub and opened to the public between the 1st and 31st January 1969 ("the January Show") is titled *January 1-31* and has the secondary title *0 Objects, 0 Painters, 0 Sculptors*. Gregory Battcock has the following to say about it:

> A beautiful exhibit that makes so much sense right now, and that is so clear and frank and simple and has such a nice smile – is offered by four artists and finally there is an exhibit that doesn't have any junk in it, doesn't have anything at all really. If that doesn't fuck up all those nice comfortable minds that like art to have big dollar signs, and armed guards, and ticket takers and don't (or do) touch, and that most annoying of all demands some modern art tries to make, *experience*.[149]

With a certain naivety, typical of those times, this is how Battcock announced that the work of conceptual art tends towards "nothingness". Despite having examined only the materiality of the work here, the "nothingness" to which conceptual works tend possess their meanings – or their *main* meanings – at other levels. There are two aspects that are particularly important to bear in mind. On the one hand, in as far as concerns the relationship of conceptual art with its times, the exclusion of the object can be related to the "information age" and the loss of hegemony of "production" in terms of economy and labour. On the other hand, in as far as concerns the scope of the work of conceptual art, "absence" operates as a device that promotes self-reflection. These two themes shall be examined in chapter II-1.

[149] Gregory Battcock, "Painting Is Obsolete", in Alberro & Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art*, p. 88 [originally published in *New York Free Press*, 23rd January 1969, p. 7].

theme I

The work is the literal translation of an idea.

2 architecture

conditions for a work to be conceptual:	
I The work is the literal translation of an idea.	**II** The work reveals infrastructural aspects of artistic practice.

theme I – 1 conceptual art	theme II – 1 conceptual art
theme I – 2 architecture	theme II – 2 architecture

project

In this second chapter, I will discuss the possibility of a work of architecture being enunciable, based on the concept of *enunciability* already defined in the previous chapter as a property of works of conceptual art. A work is enunciable when it is sustained by an *idea* that defines it – an idea that can in itself encompass that which constitutes the work and, consequently (within the scope of conceptual art), is sufficient to render its meaning accessible. The idea defines "what the work is" in all relevant aspects. Beyond the fact that the work is enunciable, the work's self-reflexive and poetic dimension also resides in the idea.

I began the previous chapter by making reference to LeWitt's manifest "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" in order to characterise the operativity of conceptual art. According to that text, the artist's task is completed with the definition of the idea – in other words, the definition of "what the work is" – and only after this task has been concluded can the execution begin. The execution of the work is merely perfunctory: it just consists in executing, as strictly and rigorously as possible, whatever is defined in the idea. The quality of the realisation is determined by its literalness, in other words, it is revealed by the significant transparency of the work with regard to the idea that defines it. The formal and material value of the work is subordinate to the idea. The work must not be anything other than literal. Any formal or material data that diverges from the literal realisation of the idea is considered noise, a departure towards the foreign scope of "autonomous formal values". For LeWitt, this method permits the elimination of any decisions taken during the execution process as well as avoiding any traces of the artist's subjectivity on the work, namely those related to manual handling and operation. In short, it allows the exclusion of features typical of the art forms LeWitt labels as expressionist.

None of this is new to architecture. In art, it is common for the authors to decide about the form of their works while they execute them with their own hands, leaving their mark in a way directly related to their "way of executing" (a practice that survived both the readymade and conceptual art, although it would gain a new meaning[150]). It is with regard to this practice that LeWitt invokes the separation between the "realm of organisation" and the "realm of realisation of the work". In architecture, on the contrary, that separation is standard practice. It is inherent to the very concept of the architecture "project". According to the task distribution model adopted progressively since its origin in the Italian Renaissance[151] until it became standard, those we call "architects" do not execute the works. They design projects. As Goodman puts it, architecture is an *allographic* art. Thinking of architecture as an activity with the ultimate purpose of producing supports for daily life – a purpose only achieved through the *use* of those supports – from a strictly operative perspective the project is the final product of the architect's creative activity. After that,

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[150] See: John Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade*, London/New York: Verso, 2007.
[151] See, for example, Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2000, pp. 29-30; Mario Carpo, *The Alphabet and the Algorithm*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 2011, pp. 16-26.

execution is perfunctory. Let us see how Alberti's work model — as described by Mario Carpo — is identical to the model proposed by LeWitt for how conceptual artists should relate to the execution of their own works:

> At various times and in different contexts Alberti insists on this ideal point of no return, where all design revisions should stop, and construction begin speedily and without hesitation (and, he adds, without any variation or change during the course of the works, regardless of who is in charge of the site). Alberti famously advised architects against directing the actual construction: in his view, building should be left to the workers and to their supervisors.[152]

This is the framework for the status of the architect as an artist and of architecture as art. According to this model, the entity that has been instituted as the "project" has two fundamental characteristics:

- It acts as the intermediary between the author(s) of the work and those who execute it. The architect's work ends with a project, based on which the builders then execute the work.
- It is autonomous as a work. As a product of the architect's activity, the project can be judged in its own right. Its qualities and flaws, even those related to the capacity of the architectural forms to support daily life (their suitability for being inhabited) or the building's performance throughout the work's existence – which only time will tell – everything that actually depends on the project can be evaluated within the project itself. Those elements are already there.

This is also the case in a work of conceptual art: the idea is self-sufficient as the record of the artist's intentions and it is the starting point for a performance that is supposed to be literal. Conceptual art approaches the operating model of the "project".

Apparently, this parallelism could lead to the conclusion that every work of architecture is conceptual. However, in order to contemplate the possibility of a work of architecture being conceptual, the existence (or not) of an entity that defines "what the work is" – the intermediary between artistic practice and the work's execution – is not the only factor to be taken into account. In the same manner as the execution of artworks by agents outside the boundaries of artistic practice does not determine that those works are conceptual (note the paradigmatic example of the industrial manufacture of minimalist sculptures), the fact that works of architecture are executed by agents – the builders, whose function is distinct from that of the architect – does not make them conceptual. The distinguishing factor in the "conceptual" resides in the nature of the definition of "what the work is". *Whether the operativity characteristic to the "architecture project" approaches the operativity of conceptual art depends on the nature of the project that defines what the constructed work may become*. It is based on this assumption that I intend to discuss the enunciability of the work of architecture in this chapter. The theme sequence will be the same as in the previous chapter on conceptual art. Once again, therefore, I shall address (1) the idealisation of the work, (2) the idea as an

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[152] Carpo, *The Alphabet and the Algorithm*, p. 21.

intermediary between idealisation and realisation and (3) realisation of the work. The following issues will be discussed, respectively:

1. the possibility that a work may have a procedural nature, in other words, the work being conceived through the accomplishment of a previously established set of procedures of which the work is the *direct reflection* (not merely a result);
2. what can be considered an "idea" within the scope of the architecture project;
2. → 3. how can the work's materiality escape the autonomy of its formal/material status and be put at the service of a literalness similar to that of a work of conceptual art;
3. experiments where the work's material status is called into question.

1. process

In this sub-chapter I shall discuss the possibility of an architecture project being conceived through a process – "process" in the conceptual acceptation I have previously defined. I shall begin by referring to Peter Eisenman's research from the time of his first *Houses of Cards*. In addition to explicitly using conceptual art as a reference, Eisenman proposes a process model for architecture projects. I will discuss his model and argue that, despite its discoursive nature and the fact that it focuses on the logic of procedures leading to form (conceptual aspects), the model is not strictly conceptual. Eisenman's model will be compared and contrasted with a few projects by Hiromi Fujii which I consider closer to being conceptual, only to conclude that the path followed by both Eisenman and Fujii does not lead to abandoning the "definition of form" to a pre-established logic – which, as I stated, is a defining factor of conceptual processes. Moving away from that historical context, I shall later refer to projects by the MVRDV collective in the 1990s. Unlike Eisenman's and Fujii's projects in the 1960s and 1970s, which focused on the internal logic of objects, MVRDV's projects focus on the conditioning factors they face in each specific commission. Based on their comparison, I shall argue that the attempt to exclude the project's empirical factors in favour of an approach to form itself encloses an insolvable paradox – a finding which, in this dissertation, defines a limit for what a conceptual process can be within the specific scope of an architecture project.

Sol LeWitt's manifests "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" and "Sentences on Conceptual Art" play a fundamental role in the definition of the category of conceptual art. They are published in 1967 and 1969, respectively. In 1970, Peter Eisenman, an architect, publishes a text under the title "Notes on Conceptual Architecture: Towards a Definition" in the *Design Quarterly* magazine[153] [1]. In the four pages used by Eisenman, the only things to be found are 15 footnotes. Apart from the small numbers indicating the place in the "supposed text" where the notes are inserted, the body of the text is left blank. Eisenman only provides data – the 15 footnotes – that: (1) inform as to the existence of *a* text and (2) evoke a thematic universe or enunciate a universe of references. Both these aspects may be related to conceptual art. On the one hand, the manifest communicates primarily through what is missing, in other words, through the difference between what it was expected to present and what it effectively does present – a strategy which can be directly identified with the conceptual art works described in paragraph C.1) of the sub-chapter "the

[153] Peter Eisenman, "Notes on Conceptual Architecture", *Design Quarterly* 78/79 (1970), pp. 1-5. If this title makes reference to the titles "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" and "Sentences on Conceptual Art" by LeWitt, it can also be understood as a sign that Eisenman is building a theoretical perspective about form that he wants to establish as an alternative to the one proposed by Christopher Alexander in the book *Notes on the Synthesis of Form*. See: Christopher Alexander, *Notes on the Synthesis of Form*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964.

work as an entity", in which a practical impediment is made in contacting the work[154]. On the other hand, part of the bibliography mentioned in the notes is about conceptual art – a major reference in the manifest.

This is not the only version of "Notes on Conceptual Architecture: Towards a Definition" published by Eisenman. In 1971, *Casabella* magazine includes an essay under the same title, but featuring all of the usual elements[155]. The text can be read in full. Although the coincidence of the titles suggests otherwise, Eisenman doesn't simply reveal what he had previously omitted. *Design Quarterly*'s footnotes are repeated in *Casabella* positioned in a very similar manner – which would suggest that the structure of the new text is similar to that of the omitted text – however, their number increased significantly. This suggests that the first text (if it was actually ever written) may have been shorter or, at least, had fewer footnotes[156]. The second is the text that I will refer to from this point onwards. It is in this text that Eisenman makes his notion of a *conceptual* architecture clear.

"Notes on Conceptual Architecture" is particularly important for two reasons. Firstly, it is a relevant manifest in its own right. It summarises the very particular perspective on architecture Eisenman founded through his research in theory of architecture (which will be examined in detail below). Just as some of Eisenman's other texts, it is one of the "masterpieces" that defined the age and is still a work of reference regarding the theoretical and operative scope of architecture. Secondly, this text is also inseparable from Eisenman's production as a project designer. It can be associated to *Houses of Cards* – the series of houses designed by Eisenman between 1968 and 1978, each of which was given a concise Roman numeral, ranging from I to XI[157]. However, it would be more appropriately associated to the first four houses of the series, numbered I to IV, those designed until 1971 [2 . 3 . 4 . 5]. These are the houses that both Eisenman[158] and the critic Mario Gandelsonas[159], establish as the coherent set that laid the foundations for Eisenman's work. (Gandelsonas is a particularly important observer of Eisenman's work, and his comments will be frequently mentioned here.)

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[154] In relation to this first version of Eisenman's manifest (and for an interpretation centred on what is History of architecture and the importance of textuality in the conceptual construction of "architecture") see: Mark Jarzombek, "A Conceptual Introduction to Architecture", Log 15 (Winter 2009), pp. 89-98.

[155] Peter Eisenman, "Notes on Conceptual Architecture: Towards a Definition", in *Eisenman Inside Out: Select Writings 1963-1988*, New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2004, pp. 8-27 [originally published as: "Appunti sull'architettura concettuale verso una definizione / Notes on Conceptual Architecture: Towards a Definition", *Casabella* 359-60 (November-December 1971), pp. 48-58].

[156] In *Casabella*, another 23 footnotes are added to the 15 initial footnotes, making a total of 38. The first and last footnotes are essentially the same. The other footnotes from the first text are repeated in the second, although some are developed further (this is what happens to footnote 7 when it becomes footnote 16, or footnote 10 when it becomes footnote 31) or reduced (footnote 8 becomes a simple bibliographical reference as footnote 28). The only footnote from the original text that is excluded in 13 – a note that makes reference to the possibility that, in the architectural form, there is a "conceptual semantic" aspect in addition to the "conceptual syntactic" aspect, as Eisenman eventually acknowledged in: Peter Eisenman, "From Object to Relationship II: Giuseppe Terragni Casa Giuliani Frigerio", in Robert A. M. Stern, Alan Plattus & Peggy Deamer (eds.), *[Re]Reading Perspecta: The First 50 Years of the Yale Architectural Journal*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 2004, pp. 299-313 [originally published in *Perspecta* 13/14, 1971].

[157] Reference is made to the analysis of Eisenman's evolution as proposed by Rafael Moneo in: Rafael Moneo, *Inquietud Teórica y Estrategia Proyectual en la Obra de Ocho Arquitectos Contemporáneos*, Barcelona: Actar, 2004, pp. 145-197.

[158] Peter Eisenman, "Misreading Peter Eisenman", in *House of Cards*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, pp. 167-186. House V is rarely mentioned and according to Eisenman himself, House VI is already a turning point – a point where other, external, aspects add to those that I intend to address here.

[159] Mario Gandelsonas, "From Structure to Subject: The Formation of an Architectural Language", in: *Oppositions Reader*, ed. K. Michael Hays, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 1998, pp. 200-223 [originally published in: *Oppositions* 17 (Summer 1979)].

The connection between this stage of Eisenman's production and Sol LeWitt's work seems evident. In "Notes on Conceptual Architecture", in addition to the fact that its title clearly alludes to LeWitt's manifests, in note 2 Eisenman identifies "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" as the most relevant reference in the definition of conceptual art. Eisenman considers LeWitt's production to be the very paradigm of "conceptual". On the other hand, the *Houses of Cards*, succinctly designated with Roman numerals, show formal similarities with LeWitt's reticulated structures. Although more complex than the cubes used by LeWitt, Eisenman's houses are also white and abstract, revealing the Cartesian logic they follow.

This professed approximation to conceptual art makes Eisenman's research a particularly suitable topic for the discussion proposed in this dissertation. No other architect has delved so far into the possibility of an architecture (simultaneously understood as a theoretical field and as a practical project practice) declaredly based on conceptual art practices. It should also be noted that this perspective on architecture arises at the same time that these conceptual practices were developing – which shows how up-to-date Eisenman is with regard to the artistic vanguard of the time.

This does not mean, as we shall see, that Eisenman adopts conceptual art as a model, merely transposing its operativity directly to the field of architecture. He does not. On the contrary, Eisenman uses conceptual art as a reference in relation to which he positions himself closer or further away. From another perspective, with the detachment gained after forty years have passed, it is also possible to question the actual scope within which Eisenman considers the definition of his "conceptual architecture". However, despite all these reservations, this stage of Eisenman's production is about *conceptual art as an operative reference for architecture*, and therefore will be repeatedly mentioned in this dissertation, with regard to a number of themes[160]. Following an introduction to general distinguishing features, I propose to begin discussing it in terms of "the project as a *process*".

Eisenman seeks to define a universal basis for viewing architectural objects, an outlook applicable to their analysis and their production. This effort dates back to his PhD dissertation titled "*The Formal Basis of Architecture"*, concluded in 1963[161]. In order to meet this objective, Eisenman proposes viewing the architectural form from two distinct perspectives: (1) that which belongs to the concrete, perceived by the senses through experience; (2) that which belongs to the abstract – or *conceptual* – and cannot be experienced although it can be described[162]. In one of the footnotes in "Notes on Conceptual Architecture",

[160] From this point forwards, it is this stage of Eisenman's path that will be referred to. However, for the sake of convenience, this fact will not be systematically mentioned.
[161] Peter Eisenman, *The Formal Basis of Modern* Architecture (fax copy of the PhD dissertation), Baden: Lars Müller, 2006.
[162] As will be demonstrated in due course, this dichotomisation is also present in Bernard Tschumi's theory, although at the service of a perspective of architecture that is very different from Eisenman's.

Eisenman associates this duality to conceptual art, quoting LeWitt's statement that "Art that is meant for the sensation of the eye primarily would be called perceptual rather than conceptual[163].

However, more than in conceptual art, it is in linguistics that Eisenman finds the theoretical basis for his definition of "conceptual" in architecture. By viewing architecture as a language, or *establishing an analogy between architecture and* language, he directly appropriates concepts from linguistics. Specifically, he employs the categories "semantics" and "syntax". Just as words have certain meanings (the field of semantics) and are combined according to certain rules (the field of syntactics), in architecture, forms also have meanings and are combined to produce more or less complex formal compounds. In this regard, Eisenman is particularly interested in linguist Noam Chomsky's theories. In 1971, he states:

> [In 1966] I began looking into other disciplines where problems of form had been presented within some critical framework. This took me to into linguistics, and more particularly to the work of Noam Chomsky in syntax. From this analogy it was possible to make several analogies between architecture and language, and more specifically to construct a crude hypothesis about the syntactic aspects of architectural form.[164]

In Chomsky, Eisenman finds the sensory/conceptual dichotomy that guides him in the analysis of form in architecture and arts – a dichotomy that emerges from his texts as a universal fact common to the various "languages". Chomsky explains this by distinguishing between:

- the perceptual or *surface* structure of language, inherent to its phonetic and physical aspects;
- the conceptual or *deep* structure of language, inherent to its syntactic aspects.

In the same manner as Chomsky is interested in syntax in the field of linguistics – the principles inherent to the logic of connection between language constituents – Eisenman becomes interested in the possibility of enunciating the principles inherent to the manipulation and combination of the architectural object's formal constituents or, even, in the possibility of enunciating a coherent and comprehensive syntactic system for architecture[165]. However, despite the parallelism (without scientific rigour, in Mario Gandelsonas' opinion[166]), Eisenman makes a distinction between verbal language and the language of architectural forms. To Eisenman, architecture (and also art) requires a more complex equation:

> Because the "object" in architecture and art has perceptual attributes as important as its conceptual ones, an elaboration of semantics and syntax to allow for the perceptual aspects of the objects would seem necessary. If pragmatics can be put aside for

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[163] in: Peter Eisenman, "Notes on Conceptual Architecture", p. 26, note 27. From this point forwards, my footnotes will always refer to the 1971 version which included the full text as well as the footnotes.

[164] Eisenman, "From Object to Relationship II, p. 299

[165] Mario Gandelsonas writes, in relation to Eisenman's research: "The oppositions public/private, interior/exterior, and staying/moving, and the articulation of a sequence to configurate these within a functional logic established by social conventions, constitute the system that in most times provided the logic for architectural form. As a result there has hardly ever been in classical or modern architecture, a formal system in its own terms – as a true language demands. And the feeling of unity transmitted by previous architectural buildings is an illusion produced by a unity of materials or building techniques rather than the conceptual unity which we find in language systems." Gandelsonas, "From Structure to Subject", p. 205.

[166] See: Mario Gandelosonas, "Linguistics in Architecture", in K. Michael Hays (ed.), *Architecture Theory since 1968*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 2000, pp. 112-122 [originally published in *Casabella* 374 (February 1973)].

> the moment, it is possible to propose a typology where both semantics and syntactics each have a surface and a deep structure – a perceptual and a conceptual aspect.[167]

In architecture, surface and deep language structures must, therefore, be investigated regarding both the semantic and syntactic aspects of form. This leads to a framework of architectural forms that Eisenman summarised as follows:

conceptual	semantic	syntactic
perceptual	semantic	syntactic

It is in the conceptual consideration of the syntactic aspects of form – the deep structure of architectural language – that Eisenman finds not only his field of research but also his proposal for a "conceptual architecture" (shaded in the table above). In order to proceed to an analysis focused on this specific aspect, Eisenman proposes that other aspects should be excluded from the approach to architecture. He advocates a purge of architecture. He renounces semantics, in other words, the meaning of forms, whether iconographic (the universe of signification so dear to Robert Venturi, for example), or functional (deriving from the modern assumption that forms must communicate the functional logic that determines them). He also renounces surface aspects with regard to the forms themselves, that is, sensory aspects grasped through perception, such as shape, texture, colour, etc. This leaves only what Eisenman considers the essence of architecture: how forms, as purely geometric entities, are manipulated and combined. Architectural objects are therefore considered exclusively in terms of the coherence – one could say *logic* – of their formal constitution or, more specifically, their geometric configuration. They are considered in the field of the abstract, where forms can be *described* with regard to their *structure*. About the *House I* project, Eisenman explains:

> This second level [the deep level of language structure] may be thought of as a range of abstract and more universal formal regularities that exist in any conception of physical space. These formal regularities are universal in the sense that such formal concepts as solid and void, centroidal and linear, planar and volumetric are primitive notions which cannot be reduced and which exist in a state of opposition in any spatial conception [Eisenman performs a typically structuralist reasoning]. This second level includes, in addition to a set of irreducible formal regularities, the transformations of these regularities necessary to produce a specific environment. Transformations may be described by such formal actions as shear, compression, and rotation to produce a new level of formal information in any specific physical environment. (...) These transformations and regularities have no substantial existence but are merely a description of this second level of formal relationships, in other words, a possible model for an architectural deep structure.[168]

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[167] Eisenman, "Notes on Conceptual Architecture", pp. 18-19.

[168] Peter Eisenman, "Cardboard Architecture: House I and House II", in *Eisenman Inside Out: Selected Writings, 1963-1988*, New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2004, p. 32. [originally published in Arthur Drexler (ed.), *Five Architects: Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1972, pp. 15-24].

Eisenman not only refers to the connections between elements but also to the actions leading to the establishment of those connections. He refers to actions that originate forms. It is at this point, at the very essence of architecture sought by Eisenman, that the *process* emerges. The conception of a project is understood as a succession of actions – as a set of *determined procedures* which, when followed according to a *determined sequence*, lead to a *determined form*. The prevalence of syntax is therefore associated to the idea that forms are the result of a *generative process*.

To view the project as a "set of procedures for the manipulation of form" is a very particular perspective that may have repercussions both in terms of the *analysis* of any existing project and of the effort of *synthesis* that the conception of a new project represents. Eisenman's theoretical construction plays this dual role.

On the one hand, it can guide the current (supra-historical[169]) analysis of architectural forms. For this, the complexity of those forms must be analysed until the generative process from which they result comes through — until the sequence of procedures followed in order to reach the "result" they represent is decoded. Eisenman used this method to analyse works by Giuseppe Terragni, which he believed particularly suitable examples to illustrate his theory – or rather, an example of operativity very close to what he himself advocates.

On the other hand, Eisenman is not limited to the scope of analysis. As I mentioned earlier, Eisenman considers that theoretical and practical production are both part of the same research. What is written and what is projected serve the same experimental purpose. In this way, his projects for houses I to IV are speculations about the deep structure of architectural language. They are conceptual syntactic exercises. With them, Eisenman makes a practical demonstration, through his own activity as an architect, that syntax is a *generative* territory – a territory of invention. In the words of Gandelsonas and David Morton,

> (...) syntactics takes on a new meaning where syntactic structure itself is seen as the primary generator of language. Eisenman incorporates this concept into architecture because it helps him to account for what he sees as a similar process of synthesis in architecture, the process of the generation of architectural form.[170]

Each of the houses is the result of a *specific* set of formal manipulations. Eisenman always starts from a simple solid: a parallelepiped or a cube. These are archetypal forms in architecture, but above all they are solids with a shape simple enough to allow attention to be focused on the operations each of those solids undergoes. Eisenman begins by organising them according to an equally basic planimetric grid. From *House I* to *House V* (a group that includes the first four, the most conceptual houses) Eisenman divides the plan

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[169] From this specific point of view – as an instrument of analysis – Eisenman's theory approaches that of Colin Rowe and his equally universalist "mathematics". For a comparison between the perspectives of these two architects, see: Robert E. Somol, "Dummy Text, or the Diagrammatic Basis of Contemporary Architecture", in Peter Eisenman, *Diagram Diaries*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1999, pp. 6-25.
[170] Mario Gandelsonas and David Morton, "On Reading Architecture", in Geoffrey Broadbent (ed.), *Signs, Symbols and Architecture*, New York: Wiley, 1980, p. 262 [originally published in *Progressive Architecture* 53 (March 1972), pp. 68-88].

into 9 squares (3x3). From *House VI* onwards, he divides it into just 4 squares (2x2). In both cases, a matrix is created that can be interpreted as a set of volumes, planes or lines – the set of elements Eisenman later subjects to successive manipulations: cutting, removal, displacement, rotation, etc.

This provides a general description of the processes Eisenman uses in his designs in order to achieve the form of his houses. I now propose looking at those projects focusing on a few specific aspects. Firstly, starting with a critical remark by Rafael Moneo, I will analyse the relation between the "time involved in the different stages of the process" and the "presentation of the process through the work" that characterises Eisenman's houses (as well as some of Fujii's projects). Following this, I will situate the processes that originated Eisenman's houses (as well as to some of Fujii's) in relation to specifically serial processes – for which purpose I will refer to Sandra Kaji-O'Grady's research about "serialism in architecture". After addressing these two themes, I will close with a discussion about the conceptual dimension of Eisenman and Fujii's processes, analysing the nature of the decisions made during those processes.

Eisenman takes examples from the history of architecture to demonstrate that a complete understanding of architectural objects should be achieved through the cognitive effort that allows determining the succession of formal operations that originated those objects. Terragni is the example that Eisenman elects as the paradigm, but there were others, going as far back as Durand. That analysis can be applied not only to the projects Eisenman is dedicated to (and he chooses those because they are most suitable), but his own projects are also meant to be decoded that way. They are meant to be "read", to use a linguistic metaphor, and even to promote the action of "reading". More than a *result*, Eisenman's houses are a *testimony* of the operations that originate them – the operations that compose their generative process. They communicate those operations, or at least, they are supposed to. Not an easy task, in truth. His houses are very complex. Rafael Moneo refers to this problem of "communicating the process through the work" and concludes that, in relation to Eisenman's houses,

> To represent architecture involves more than just defining the object. To represent architecture means providing a record of what the process consisted in. And so we will see how the ideal reticle on which the work will be based is activated by an initial formal impulse that leads to a series of changes and interventions that are documented in all of its phases. Documenting the process allows it to be visible: the record of which were its different stages allows us to understand how was the development of formal operations dictated by the mind throughout time. This is something to which the object itself offers resistance, because we only see it in its final state. Eisenman's interest in leaving a record of what he calls the "ideas" that generated architecture leads him to confound those with the process: only the knowledge about the process can allow us to gain access to the essence of architecture.[171]

[171] Moneo, *Inquietud Teórica*, p. 151.
"Representar la arquitectura no será tan solo definir el objeto. Representar la arquitectura significa dar cuenta de lo que fue el proceso. Y así veremos cómo la reticula ideal sobre la que se va a trabajar está activada por un primer impulso formal que da origen a una serie de

Moneo's theoretical scope does not include conceptual art in its reference framework. This becomes quite clear when, in that same text, just a few lines earlier, Moneo refers to the "concept of process" as a contingency Eisenman is forced to include in his work because he (supposedly) departs from the traditional model of subjective authorship. As has already been pointed out, Eisenman views the process as a strategy, not a contingency. That is precisely why it is discussed here. However, Moneo's thoughts about the "work as a record of the process" raise a pertinent question about the connection between work and process, or about how *time* is involved in that connection.

As Moneo stated, the privileged location for ideas is not the actual work but rather the records of the process. More than form, documental elements are the privileged means for communicating the generative process of form throughout its successive stages. Process becomes clear when, instead of its result, one sees the schemata that describe its stages – the narrative sequence of operations throughout which Eisenman conducts the project, from the basic volume that acts as the starting point to the complexity of the final form. A succession of entities indicates a *narrative*. Although Eisenman focuses on geometric abstraction, his works acquire a narrative character because that is how they are presented. Not only are the constituents of forms related in a way that Eisenman classifies as syntactic, but the different stages of the process are also combined similarly to sentences in a text, in other words, they are combined according to sequential logic. A certain form follows another, like comic panels or frames in a movie. Eisenman describes his houses as a "cinematic manifestation"[172]. In 1973, Eisenman produces 1000 drawings that form an animated sequence, in the same manner as a flipbook, illustrating the process of *House IV*. This is how the project was presented at the Milan *Triennale* that same year[173].

The ambiguity between "presenting the result" and "presenting the process" found in Eisenman's projects can also be considered in view of the distinction I established between the acceptations of *process* in process art and conceptual art, respectively:

- In process art, the process is the set of actions that the object, as a material entity, is subject to. The work is a testimony of those actions in the sense that they affected its form. The work's form consists of all the marks left on the matter that composes it.

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transformaciones e intervenciones que se documentan en todas y cada una de las fases. Documentar el proceso permite hacer que éste se haga visible: el registro de lo que fueron las distintas etapas del mismo permite entender cuál fue el desarrollo de las operaciones formales dictadas por la mente en el tiempo. Algo a que lo objeto en sí mismo se resiste, en la medida en que lo vemos tan solo en su estado final. El interés de Eisenman por dejar constancia de lo que él llama las "ideas" que generaron la arquitectura, le lleva a confundir éstas con el proceso: tan solo el conocimiento del mismo nos permitirá tener acceso a la esencia de la arquitectura".

[172] Eisenman, "Misreading Peter Eisenman", pp. 178 and 181.

[173] In a critical stance, Sandra Kaji-O'Grady states in relation to this Eisenman film: "Comprising one thousand frames of the drawings with a blank frame interspersed between each image he hoped to achieve an effect of motion and pulsation. The apparent linear process of the series of moves made by each successive diagram proved, however, to not be linear at all since continuity eluded the film. Intervals between stages in the building's transformation emerged as inconsistent and the sequences were jerky. It is telling though that Eisenman imagined what was being carried out would be legible as a continuous and linear unfolding in time.]. Sandra Kaji-O'Grady, *Serialism in Art and Architecture: Context and Theory*, (PhD dissertation), Monash University, School of Literary, Visual and Performance Studies, 2001. http://arrow.monash.edu.au/hdl/1959.1/9120, pp. 149.

- In conceptual art, the process is understood as a set of conceptual procedures that originate successive forms. The work is a testimony of those successive stages because it is composed of the succession of forms obtained.

It could be said, in both cases, that the various stages completed over time (that is, diachronically) are presented simultaneously through the work (that is, synchronically). But, despite this similarity, a fundamental difference exists between these two acceptations of process. In the former, the several stages – of material order – overlap the same object, which may render them indiscernible and thus compromise a clear understanding of its "chronological order". In the latter, for each stage – of conceptual order – there is a corresponding form. It is only because the different forms are juxtaposed that they exist at the same point in time, similarly to Muybridge's sets of photograms. Neither of these process models can be directly linked to Eisenman's projects. His projects differ from works of process art in the sense that they result from a process of definition through which form is viewed as a geometrical entity – not as a material entity. However, similarly to works of process art, his houses result from performing a set of successive operations accumulated over the same support[174].

With regard to this aspect, as mentioned before, conceptual art introduces yet another possibility: the presentation of the process itself. The process therefore acquires a dual function. It is a generative path and, at the same time, an entity presented as a "set of results" or the "illustration of those results". It maintains its operative function while taking the place of the work itself. It is at this point, as Moneo notes, that the problem with Eisenman's process is revealed. Eisenman does not make the two functions converge, and presents the form that results from the process – that which is meant to be built – separately from the diagrams that compose the actual process. One could argue that this problem is related to the very nature of architecture or, more precisely, to the inevitability of reaching a form – the form to be built. One could mention the opposition between the abstract nature of conceptual processes (and the freedom of means at the disposal of art for the presentation of abstract entities) and the concrete nature of architectural forms. And in art, the work can consist in the presentation of an abstract process with its matter playing a purely informative role[175]. So, for a process to take the work's place, it would be enough for the process to occupy the support required for its own presentation. For example, it can be written on a sheet of paper.

This is not possible in architecture. It's a fact. The diagrams that constitute Eisenman's process, even if set on a material support, cannot substitute the work: they are not inhabitable forms. However, even if this

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[174] There is a divergence here from the perspective that Stan Allen proposes in the text "Trace Elements" regarding Eisenman's processes. Allen analyses them, taking into consideration the concept of "index" as defined by Pierce and, more specifically, the use that Rosalind Krauss makes of the concept (already mentioned in chapter I-1, in relation to Process art). But the successive procedures that take place in Eisenman's processes are not of a material nature. (Eisenman will only experiment with what is in fact the index at a later time, specifically in his project Fin d'Ou T Hou S, from 1983). This is why, Allen needs to mention that "Eisenman's indexes (like those Krauss described in the seventies) are more mediated, and inevitably work through codified geometries and representational systems". Stan Allen, "Trace Elements", in Cynthia DAVIDSON (ed.), *Tracing Eisenman: Peter Eisenman Complete Works*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2006, pp. 49-65.

[175] I refer to the possibility, enunciated in paragraph A) of the sub-chapter "the work as an entity", of *reducing the materiality of the work to a purely instrumental condition*.

is an assumption for the parallelism between conceptual art and architecture, it does not entirely cover the issue in question here. Even within conceptual art, it is possible to transpose an abstract process to the realm of the concrete. Take Bochner's drawings for example, dated 1966, based on the *Fibonacci sequence*. Bochner presents them simply as drawings, just as Eisenman presents the diagrams that originated his houses. But Bochner also presents the contents of those drawings in the form of scale models – three-dimensional forms [100 . 101]. The difference is that Bochner presents several scale models corresponding to the successive evolutionary stages of the sequence, while Eisenman presents only *the* result. Eisenman's process (similarly to works of *process* art) does not form a series of successive results. Instead, it progressively leads to a single final result. Sandra Kaji-O'Grady refers to this characteristic of Eisenman's processes in her dissertation *Serialism in Art and Architecture: Context and Theory*[176]. She wrote:

> (...) unlike serial music or art in which each element is of equal status, the [Eisenman's] drawings are conceived within a process of development towards a final state. (...)These are not combinations of a number of elements, but sequences demonstrating the cumulative effect of iterative and additive procedures.[177]

In fact, the different stages between an initial pure solid and the complex forms of Eisenman's houses are not, in themselves, a work of architecture, nor do they constitute a work of architecture as a whole. Eisenman's series are preliminary to the work itself. This is the main reason why Kaji-O'Grady distinguishes Eisenman's processes from typical Serialist processes[178].

This conclusion may lead to a certain distrust regarding the adequacy of conceptual processes within the scope of the project of architecture. One may ask: does the fact that, in architecture, the process must lead to *a* project – to *a* form – render the presentation of the stages of that process impossible? Is it inevitable that the process should lead to a single result? Some of Hiromi Fujii's projects prove that it is not. I shall refer to them next.

Fujii's theoretical production is not as vast and recognised as Eisenman's. Actually, he acknowledges Eisenman as an important theoretical reference for his own research, where theory and practice also merge. This familiarity between the work of both architects is also reflected by the formal universe, marked by the clear-cut geometry that is common to them. However, despite these similarities, the specificity of Fujii's work makes it particularly suitable to the theme of the "conceptual process in architecture". Unlike Eisenman, Fujii does not make reference to conceptual art in his texts but, despite this, some of his projects are particularly close to the conceptual process model.

Fujii is another of the architects Kaji-O'Grady refers to in her search for traces of serialism in architecture. In Fujii's work she found examples of projects that are more serialist than Eisenman's. While

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[176] Kaji-O'Grady, *Serialism in Art and Architecture*
[177] *Ibidem*, p. 149.
[178] Stan Allen also notes this fact. Allen, "Trace Elements", pp. 58-59.

Eisenman's processes aim to obtain a single form, a single result, some of Fujii's projects are constituted by the set of results obtained through a repetition/variation process. Kaji-O'Grady states:

> Fujii's investigations into seriality have focused on the opportunities for internal relationships within the building form. (...) Already in this early project [Project Similar Connotation Junction, from 1975] iteration is considered as a spatial coincidence within the architectural composition rather than, unlike Eisenman, a step in the process of arriving at a single form.[179]

Although Kaji-O'Grady examines other examples, I believe that the projects from 1975 are those that better illustrate, due to the evidence of their form, the possibility of the *different parts* that constitute an architectural object reflecting the *successive stages* of a generative project. In addition to the *Project Similar Connotation Junction* [9 . 10], I refer to the *Todoroki House*, built in Ichikawa, and the *Project Similar Concentricity*.

Todoroki House is a cube – a cube which is itself composed of eight cubes joined together, four in each of the two storeys (Fujii does not resort to the more typical tripartite organisation of the "nine square" plan) [11 . 12 . 13]. With great formal economy, the size of the edges of each of the eight units is therefore determined by the height necessary to a storey, thus configuring cubes. Apart from juxtaposing these eight units, Fujii carries out only one other repetition, this time inside the cubes themselves. Five of the cubes contain smaller cubes inside them, as if they were echoes of the external form on a progressively decreasing scale. This decrease of the scale is not limited to the dimension of the cubes. It also determines the size of the openings. Each cube appears to be a miniature of the cube that contains it. In three cases, the repetition happens only once; in the other three cases there is a double repetition, resulting in three cubes inside each other.

Project Similar Concentricity [6 . 7 . 8] consists in the form's replication of itself. The form is composed of three concentric parallelepipeds, also following a variation in scale that determines the size of volumes and openings. It is a matryoshka house: inside a box where the house's living areas are located, there is a box that contains the bedrooms, inside which there is a box containing facilities (a bathroom and storeroom). In his previous project – *Todoroki House* – the unit that is repeated eight times, precisely because it's *always* the same form that is repeated, acquires the significance of a base form by means of which, *in some cases*, the inner, smaller forms are obtained. In the *Project Similar Concentricity*, since that first sequence of repetition does not exist, there is no reference that allows us to determine if the process progresses by decreasing the scale of the bigger box, or by enlarging the scale, starting with the smaller box.

In both these projects, each step in the form's generative process leads to a new form that is then added to the form determined by the previous step. It works through seriality. The project presents the process that originated it in the Muybridge fashion: it presents side by side – that is, *synchronically* – a set

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[179] Kaji-O'Grady, *Serialism in Art and Architecture*, pp. 156-157.

of stages supposedly ensuing in time – that is, *diachronically*. This is not the only reason why Fujii's projects differ from Eisenman's. There is also another difference in that, in theory, Fujii's processes may never conclude. Despite being "interrupted" in order to stabilise the *final form to be built*, it would be possible to keep accumulating forms, continuing those processes. Interestingly, one other project – the *Marutake Building*, built in Konosu in 1976 [14 . 15] – could almost be interpreted as a development of the *Todoroki House* process.

Kaji-O'Grady makes reference to this. She identifies the very definition of serialism with the possibility of a determined generative logic being operated *ad infinitum*, continuing to produce consecutive results without limit. I don't think this is a necessary condition for a work to be serial, at least according to its definition within the scope of conceptual art. In mathematics, there is a difference between *series* and *sequence*. George Kubler explains that difference in a text that is considered a reference among conceptual artists dedicated to this subject:

> In mathematical usage a series is the indicated sum of a set of terms, but a sequence is any ordered set of quantities like the positive integers. A series therefore implies a close grouping, and a sequence suggests an open-ended, expanding class.[180]

However, both these possibilities can be found at the basis of serial conceptual art works:

- *Incomplete Open Cubes* is a work LeWitt started in 1965, based on the geometric definition of 122 forms – all the three-dimensional forms that can be obtained by combining the edges of a cube without completing the cube, in other words, ensuring that at least one of the twelve edges is missing. This way it is possible to obtain: 3 cubes with 3 edges, 5 cubes with 4 edges, 14 cubes with 5 edges, 24 cubes with 6 edges, 32 cubes with 7 edges, 25 cubes with 8 edges, 13 cubes with 9 edges, 5 cubes with 10 edges and 1 cube with 11 edges [98]. The definition of this set of geometrical forms brought about a number of works: a table where all the 122 possibilities are numbered and organised; a sculpture reproducing that table three-dimensionally, as if it were a tray placed on the floor; a set of 122 framed pictures, each composed of an axonometric representation plus a black and white photograph of the sculpture, corresponding to each of the possibilities; and, a series of 122 independent sculptures of each incomplete open cube".

  This work is a series. The possibilities for different combinations are limited to 122 only.
- Bochner's works based on the Fibonacci sequence, as the name implies, are sequences. It is Bochner who defines a limit, so that those works do not extend infinitely and therefore can be set into diagrams or volumes[181].

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[180] George Kubler, "The Shape of Time", in Peter Osborne (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, p. 209 [originally published as a book: George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962].
[181] See: James Meyer (ed.), *Minimalism*, London: Phaidon, 2000, p. 110-111.

Therefore, out of the factors considered by Kaji-O'Grady, this is not the most relevant for this discussion. Eisenman's processes are closed and Fujii's are open. More important is the fact that Fujii's processes from 1975 evolve, bringing about successive results. In those processes, *time* is condensed in a set of forms that correspond to successive points in time within that process. In this way, Fujii solves the problem Moneo detected in Eisenman's houses: in Fujii's projects, there isn't a process *and* a project; instead, *process and project are one and the same*. Time is condensed on a building (a static entity) in a literal manner: time is not construed through what the building *reveals* (the building does not condense the different process stages into an *amalgamation* that evokes them), but rather through what it is (the building is composed of the juxtaposition of all the results obtained throughout those stages).

Up to this point, the discussion about the process focused on two aspects: (1) the connection between "the time involved in the different process stages" and the "presentation of the process through the work" and (2) the difference between the processes that originated results stage by stage and the processes that are developed with a view to obtaining a single final result. These aspects serve to distinguish between different types of process. They are relevant namely when considering which processes are serial and which are not. However, as I stated in the previous chapter, the factor that determines if a process is conceptual (or serial, in the cases of LeWitt and Bochner) *consists in the nature of the decision made during that process*. A process is entirely conceptual when there is a separation between the work's configuration (means) and the abstract logic that actually determines that configuration (end). The artist does not determine the form of the work directly. Instead, he chooses the device – the idea – that will determine that form. The author becomes the author only of a generative mechanism, which, by itself, will procedurally determine the form of the work. In conceptual art, to produce a work based on a procedural idea means that the sequence of procedures that constitute the process are, therefore (although with varying degrees of rigour and objectivity):

- *predetermined*. The idea determining the constitution of the process exists before the process is triggered.
- *free of subjectivity*. The autonomy with which the idea (through the process) generates the work implies that the author withdraws, as a subjective agent, from determining the form. The process takes place "without him". The idea has the power to act by itself. In the first chapter, I stated that there are two major paradigms regarding self-sufficient generative ideas: those that operate in a totally objective, mathematical manner (which were used as an example for large part of the argument), and those that operate randomly (originating from the historical avant-garde movements).

The fact that decisions are taken within a framework of relative objectivity is not, therefore, enough for a process to be conceptual.

In order to address this theme, I will first continue the analysis of Eisenman's and Fujii's processes;

then I shall refer to processes by the Dutch collective MVRDV and, based on them, I shall identify two paradigms of the conceptual process. The conclusions I will present at the end of this sub-chapter result from the comparative analysis of these architects' works.

In order to further the analysis of Eisenman's processes, I propose to compare one of his works to one of LeWitt's. As an example of LeWitt's serial production, I have chosen *Incomplete Open Cubes*, while Eisenman's houses will be represented by the *House II* project, dating back to 1969-70 [3]. Both of these are works where a matrix of purely Euclidean geometry is adopted. In both cases, that matrix plays a dual role: it acts as the conceptual support for the respective efforts of definition of form and it constitutes the main ingredient of the expression that, to a certain extent, is common to both works.

As I mentioned, LeWitt's work is composed of all the three-dimensional forms that can be obtained through the combination of the edges of a cube, without completing it. The variations resulting from this enunciation are not subject to any degree of arbitrariness. They are rigorously determined by the mathematical nature of a *series*: logic and sequential enumeration of all the possibilities generated by a given definition. The work results in 122 forms, but LeWitt is not responsible for that result. He is only responsible for the definition that actually leads to obtaining that set of forms. LeWitt is an artist, not a mathematician. The significance of that set of incomplete cubes is not limited to confirming mathematical logic or to its exaltation. The automatism of the process for obtaining the 122 cubes, patent especially when we consider the whole set, is merely the starting point for consideration of the work's content. What the work does, in fact, is submit *order* to a context of subjectivity. The decision to exhaustively apply a mathematical logic that does not go beyond its own redundancy reveals a clear detachment from reason (as perceived in Western civilisation). The work's meanings are produced from this statement[182].

This is not the case with *House II*. One could say that the choice of this house's forms (as of others in the same series) involves objectivity to a certain extent – which Eisenman establishes so that his projects have a discoursive character on the theme of architecture as a language. However, the process is never left to the inevitability of a self-sufficient logic. Eisenman's choices do not focus on an idea that determines the form. They focus on the form directly, and in that sense, they're open to subjectivity. Referring to the start of the process, Eisenman explains:

> Any given coordinates of space can be described as linear, planar, or volumetric. The coordinates of a cubic space are described by its edge or its center; the edge composed of lines or planes, the center by a line or volume. In this particular house the center condition is arbitrarily defined by a square volume. From this the original square is divided into nine squares.[183]

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[182] Regarding this aspect of LeWitt's work, see: Rosalind Krauss, "LeWitt in Progress", in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, pp. 244-258 [originally published in: *October* 6 (Fall 1978)].
[183] Eisenman, "Cardboard Architecture", p. 35.

Eisenman chooses to divide the original square plan into nine squares. It is a quite particular division. It is the minimum division that allows enunciating a centre and two extremities and, in that sense, it assumes an ambiguous profile somewhere in between the most elementary seriality (the simple repetition of an element) and the classic tripartite structures (organised hierarchically with emphasis on the "centre")[184]. LeWitt uses a similar matrix in some of his works. Eisenman adds:

> These [nine] squares are marked by a matrix of sixteen square columns. The first six diagrams present one set of conditions possible from this initial definition. [They correspond to several ways of splitting a matrix into nine parts: planes on a given direction, planes on the direction orthogonal to the previous, planes in both directions, pillars formed at the crossing of those planes, etc.] The selection of the conditions, as opposed to any other condition of such a deep structure, is at this stage of work, arbitrary. (...) [After a few form-manipulating steps have been taken] It is to be noted that the planar and volumetric conditions are linear and directional in opposing axes. While there are obviously other combinations of planes and volumes, these chosen oppositions suggest one prior condition of an underlying structure [underlying to form] – which when transformed will produce a level of implied or virtual information in the actual space. (...) The further diagrams concern the development of one possible transformation, from this underlying structure to an actual environment.[185]

As is clear from his description, Eisenman makes his choices from among the multiple possibilities for manipulation provided by the structure. He chooses the one he believes to be the most appropriate. Some of his decisions are taken according to a certain arbitrariness (as he puts it) while others seek to obtain a determined effect (as is the case of the deliberate perpendicularity between planimetric and volumetric elements). This is also how Gandelsonas describes Eisenman's process. In an essay published in the *Oppositions* magazine during the summer of 1979, he wrote:

> At every stage there are rules that permit the selection of what can be called correct configurations and the discarding of the inappropriate ones. "Correct" in his terms is not to deal with beauty or meaning. Eisenman selects not only those shapes that are most consistent with the structure but also the ones which transmit in the most direct way the idea that he is trying to develop through the house. The aim of the process is to find a law, a general rule that will combine each of the partial moves or stages into a continuous uninterrupted sequence explanatory of the process from simple beginning to a complex end.[186]

From the perspective of what a conceptual process is, this is all quite vague[187]. Stan Allen – who summarily refers to Eisenman's type of process as being "semi-automatic" and constituted by "more or less rigorous procedures" – tells a story in a footnote which, although devoid of any scientific validity, makes the arbitrariness of the houses' generative processes quite clear:

> A story told around the Institute when I was a student in the late seventies (I have no idea if it is true) underlines this idea of the viewer/reader as "detective". The story goes that Eisenman gave a student a drawing of House VI, noting that the house had

[184] Regarding this matrix (designated "nine-square") and about the meaning that it acquires in this historical context, see: Somol, "Dummy Text".
[185] Eisenman, "Cardboard Architecture", p. 35.
[186] Gandelsonas, "From Structure to Subject, p. 206.
[187] Allen, "Trace Elements, p. 59.

> been designed according to a strict series of geometrical transformations; could the student reconstruct that series from its end point? In other words, could he construct a plausible narrative from the clues left behind? Apparently the student came up with a perfectly logical series of geometrical operations that led flawlessly back to the starting point, but had absolutely nothing to do with the actual design process. There was nothing startling about this, (although apparently it surprised Eisenman at the time) but it does underscore the essentially arbitrary nature of the design process, and the impossibility of regulating meaning and interpretation.[188]

Far from being predetermined, decisions are made as the process unravels. This is the opposite of what LeWitt advocates. In a conceptual process, decisions culminate with the definition of the idea. Formalising the idea is already a perfunctory task. Notwithstanding, it is clear that decision-making throughout the process is something LeWitt excludes from the conceptual universe: the decisions relative to the *composition* of form. When Gandelsonas refers to the forms that "transmit the idea in the most direct way", he is not referring to the literalness of the idea's realisation. The sentence goes on to clarify that that idea is what Eisenman "is trying to develop through the house". It is as if a writer, while writing, were choosing the most appropriate words to communicate something – which is very different from a writer leaving the choice of words to a predetermined, de-subjectivised device, as Warhol does when, in his book *a: a novel*, he simply transcribes audio recordings of common day-to-day conversations. Eisenman opts for a determined *arrangement* with a determined *formal effect* in mind.

Eisenman and LeWitt are therefore moving in opposite directions. One could say that they both try to encourage the insight of those who experience their works and, in that sense, it is part of the strategy of both to use their works to expose the existence of *logic*. However, while LeWitt presents the most elementary expression of logic as something evident and the work is developed from there, Eisenman presents an ambiguous expression of logic as an indication of the existence of logic. Their "logic" is not quite the same. For LeWitt, it's about the logic itself, under the form of mathematics, which he takes to the point where it is exhausted in its own tautology. For Eisenman, it's about an "applied logic", at the service of the comprehension of formal language. Regardless of this distinction, one can say that LeWitt uses strictly rational data to produce a purely subjective speculation (for him, "1. Conceptual Artists are mystics rather than rationalists. (...)"[189]), while Eisenman starts with an exercise in subjectivity in order to achieve rational phenomena ("In *House II* there is a concern for space as the subject of logical discourse."[190]).

This difference can be considered according to the type of data dealt with in each of these acceptations of process:

Eisenman deals with data from the logic system; LeWitt uses the logic system as data.

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[188] *Ibidem*, p. 62, note 10.
[189] LeWitt, "Sentences on Conceptual Art", p. 11.
[190] Peter Eisenman, "Cardboard Architecture", p. 39.

Eisenman manipulates the system's data in its complexity; LeWitt reduces the manipulation of that data to its most elementary expression – that strictly necessary in order to refer to that system and expose its inherent logic.

Eisenman maintains an ambiguous relationship with the system, trying to build a discourse about it but never actually managing to escape it – never ceasing to refer to it as a context; for LeWitt, the system is the thematic object of a distanced perspective.

In short, I would say that if the choices made within a conceptual process are characterised by being previously determined and free from subjectivity, then Eisenman's process is not conceptual. Eisenman makes subjective choices throughout the process[191]. Eisenman's manipulation of the syntactic system assumes a degree of subjectivity that does not allow it to be read transparently. His objectives involve a certain degree of opacity. Only in this way can he reveal the syntactic dimension of architectural forms by playing with those very forms – the game involving the (discoursive) transparency and the (ludic) opacity of communication Eisenman establishes in the "passage from perception to cognition" of his houses.

From this, I can conclude that the way in which Eisenman operates within the processes he creates is contaminated by his own authorial subjectivity – the type of authorial subjectivity that reflects directly upon the form. It admits decisions during the process and admits that those decisions are of a compositional order. He builds a discourse tending towards the objective while, at the same time, he molds the forms of that discourse in order to turn them into a vehicle for authorial *expression*. He therefore performs two functions. As explained by Gandelsonas in the text "From Structure to Subject: The Formation of an Architectural Language", published in 1979,

> (...) in Eisenman's work the subject has been there from the beginning; its presence is not excluded (...) but, with its architectural knowledge it acts more like that quasi-theoretical subject of Chomskian linguistics. Its role is twofold. First it acts as a heuristic device, the *inventor* of the syntactic process. Second it operates to test or control the introductions of shapes by means of its architectural intuition.[192]

By departing from the frequent assertion that the subject is absent from Eisenman's work, Gandelsonas exposes its authorial subjectivity. In all truth, I don't think Eisenman is very far from mannerism: he resorts to a system with certain rules (it's hard to see it as an invention) and, taking it as a reference, he introduces distortions that (while building a discourse) are an *expressive* mark of authorship. From this perspective, one could find echoes of a deep academicism in Eisenman's research[193].

Eisenman himself ends up acknowledging that his houses are not conceptual. In the text "Misreading

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[191] There is a divergence here from the opinions of several authors who see Eisenman's processes as serialist. Sandra Kaji-O'Grady provides a summary of those opinions, informing not only of her own opinion, but also Sanford Kwinter's, Michael Sorkin's and Anthony Vidler's, in: Sandra Kaji-O'Grady, "Serial Techniques in the Arts", pp. 123-134.

[192] Gandelsonas, "From Structure to Subject, p. 206.

[193] I have already been able to defend this perspective with the "conceptual" works of Eisenman in an article I wrote in 2006, when I began this research, called "Conceptualismo em Arquitectura". José Capela, "Conceptualismo em Arquitectura", *Murphy* 2 (2007), pp. 146-179.

Peter Eisenman" that he publishes in his book *Houses of Cards* in 1987, the architect provides a retrospective perspective about his series of houses. He recalls his initial purpose, stating that:

> In order to achieve a truly autonomous architectural object, it was necessary to remove the designer, with his inherent cultural prejudices, from a position of authority in the design process.[194]

He recalls, for example, that in *House IV*,

> A "logical formula", that is, a step-by-step procedural model, was established.[195]

But he ends up acknowledging, almost at the end of the text, that after all:

> (...) the texts for these houses, ostensibly explanation of the process of their making, were in fact, albeit unconsciously, fictionalizations, misreadings, creations of unreal histories.[196]

More than a *process*, in the strict sense of the term in the conceptual field, Eisenman may simply be developing a "procedural style". He creates the process as a fictional possibility. His iconographic effort opens the way to the possibility of a conceptual process in architecture. As Gandelsonas states, referring to the mental re-enactment of the process that is supposed to be applied to Eisenman's houses, "At least there is a strong illusion that it is possible that one can reconstruct this process"[197].

After his first four houses, the path followed by Eisenman will lead him, particularly after *House X*, to a new experimental period. He will leave behind what he self-critically considers to be the humanism of those first projects – a humanism that, according to him, is reflected precisely in the idea of composition as an organisation of parts into a coherent unit[198]. In his new post-humanist stage, Eisenman will enter the realm of metaphor, trying to translate a specific mental framework (in this case, the crisis of the subject) into a formal rhetoric (in this case, disjunction and fragment) – a metaphorical realm which would remain in the international architecture scene at least until the "pro-Deleuzian formal trends" that proliferated during the transition to the 21st Century. In this way, Eisenman definitively abandons any association to conceptual art.

Now that I have concluded the argument seeking to clarify that Eisenman's processes are not predetermined, I will refer to those processes once again to determine the role that the subject (the author) plays in them by opposition to the role he plays in conceptual processes. This is the theme of Gandelsonas "From Structure to Subject", the text I quoted above. Instead of referring to Eisenman specifically,

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[194] Eisenman, "Misreading Peter Eisenman", in *Houses of Cards*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 174.
[195] *Ibidem*, p. 177.
[196] *Ibidem*, p. 185.
[197] Gandelsonas, "From Structure to Subject", p. 216.
[198] Regarding this transition, see: Eisenman, "Misreading Peter Eisenman".

Gandelsonas introduces the theme of' "The Subject of Architecture"[199], resorting to a historical retrospective dating back to the Renaissance. He refers namely to the theory produced by Julien Guadet and his book *Éléments et Théorie de l'Architecture* from 1901. Gandelsonas wrote:

> (...) the subject, as embodied in the notion of the designing architect, is also implied in the very notion of *composition*, since the architectural idea is itself generated by the subject's intuition – "the true genesis of the artistic idea" (...) Beyond this, of course, an allusion to the subject is always implicit in any definition of the object of architecture as a technical practice; wherever we note an appeal to "intuition", "reason", "invention" in architectural treatises, the subject is always present.[200]

The way that Gandelsonas regards the role of the subject in architecture involves an acceptation of "idea" foreign to conceptual art. I shall mention this matter in due course. For now, in as far as regards the process, this excerpt is particularly relevant because, while distant from any pretension to an "absence of the subject", it claims that authorship may become manifest in different scopes. In this way, I believe Gandelsonas' perspective on authorship in architecture converges with my own perspective on authorship in conceptual art, in general, and in predetermined processes in particular. I start off from the general principle that there is no art or architecture without an authorial subject. Based on this principle, from an operative point of view, part of the corollary of conceptual art seems to be: the possibilities of a flexible authorship (in relation to the agents of the decisions) and its multiple focuses (in relation to that which is decided on). Conceptual art is a field open to shifts in authorship. Better said: authorship modes are themselves a theme of conceptual invention. The comparison I made between Eisenman and LeWitt is based precisely on this perspective: Eisenman's authorship focuses on the object's form (in the traditional way), whereas the predetermined processes proposed by LeWitt imply that authorship involves inventing an operative device to decide about the object's form.

How about Fujii? Can the processes of his 1975 works be considered conceptual? Fujii supports his project design activity in texts of great theoretical density, but he does not reveal much about the procedures that led to forms in his projects. One can, however, analyse the forms themselves. There is one thing that immediately sets them apart from Eisenman's: their straightforwardness. Because Eisenman manipulates the form until it becomes complex, the process tends to become illegible. The procedures carried out by Fujii are easy to read, not only because they don't overlap (as demonstrated), but also because they are elementary. Because they are elementary, it is possible to perceive the logic that determines them. Fujii is in agreement with LeWitt's assumptions when he states that:

> In fact it is best that the basic unit be deliberately uninteresting so that it may more easily become an intrinsic part of the entire work. Using complex basic forms only disrupts the unity of the whole. Using a simple form repeatedly narrows the field of the

[199] Gandelsonas, "From Structure to Subject", pp. 208-215.
[200] *Ibidem*, p. 208.

> work and concentrates the intensity to the arrangement of the form. This arrangement becomes the end while the form becomes the means.[201]

It was possible to describe, or explain, Fujii's works in just a few lines – this would be impossible to do with Eisenman's houses. Fujii's works are to that extent *enunciable*. And, in being so, they place whoever sees them before a clear logic, as happens with LeWitt's serial works. It is precisely that ostensible logic that brings him closer to conceptual art – a fact appropriately pointed out by Kaji-O'Grady when contradicting an analysis by the critic John Whiteman:

> Whiteman finds it paradoxical that Fujii insists on the indeterminacy of meaning yet uses such rational and systematic methods. He believes that there is a deep contradiction in his architectural thinking and that "his methods and intentions are at odds with one another." Whiteman is right in that the seemingly rational methods seem at odds with indeterminacy, yet we have seen in the example of LeWitt and other Serial Artists that this is exactly what is at enacted in serialism.[202]

The issue here is whether Fujii uses "such rational and systematic methods" as Whiteman claims they are. It becomes necessary to determine if the procedures with a perceptible logic are predetermined – in other words, if the enunciation defines the *manner* in which the form is obtained without margin for decisions *during* the process. Fujii does not account for that, and this is not what his projects reveal. Once established, the generative logic is used according to the programme. Despite following a generative principle for the entirety of the project, Fujii makes sure the dimensions and openings of each space are adequate to their respective function, while also ensuring the specific relative position of the different spaces. He makes a compromise between a prior decision – the generative logic – and the small decisions that allow that generative logic to adapt to circumstances dictated by the programme to be followed. By addressing the objects' internal logic, Fujii does not quite leave the project's configuration to factors free from the subjectivity of his own choices. He contaminates what could otherwise be considered a "conceptual process". Although he does not seek to obtain formal effects as capricious as Eisenman, he makes decisions during the process – decisions that constitute a mark of subjectivity contrary to the radicalism of the "art-making machine". Fujii does not totally exclude the subject from the generative process either. I therefore don't think his work can be characterised in the manner Whiteman does, nor as Hajime Yatsuka does when he refers to Fujii's absurd "hyper-rationalism"[203] – an expression that would actually be better suited to describe LeWitt's or Bochner's works.

From this point forwards, I shall not continue to examine serialist architecture projects as LeWitt and Bochner see them. Instead, I shall discuss the possibility of establishing other types of predetermined

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[201] LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art", p. 13-14.
[202] Kaji-O'Grady, *Serialism in Art and Architecture*, p. 160.
[203] Hajime Yatsuka, "Architecture in the Urban Desert: A Critical Introduction to Japanese Architecture after Modernism", in K. Michael Hays (ed.), *Oppositions Reader*, p. 278.

processes – processes in which there is a separation between the configuration of the work (means) and the abstract logic that, in fact, determines that configuration (end). In this sense, I shall open up the examination of the projects to less self-sufficient logics than mathematics.

As I stated earlier, Eisenman does not invent predetermined processes. Notwithstanding, he is often referred to as the "father" of generative processes in architecture. He is mentioned, in particular, as the predecessor of processes using *software* as the generative device – processes where an *input*-activated computer program generates a form by processing the data entered. This operating model was introduced as a novelty in architecture during the 1990s, by teams such as Eisenman's but also by younger architects such as Greg Lynn, for example. If Eisenman does not act in that way in the 1970s, why is he associated to these computer-based generative processes? Because, although his processes are driven by authorial subjectivity, Eisenman presents them as if they followed some sort of meta-authorial logic. As I said, although Eisenman does not in fact initiate conceptual processes in architecture, there is one thing he actually does do: he creates the fiction of those processes. In that sense, but only to that extent, he invents them.

There's another reason for which it is curious that Eisenman is associated to the computer-based generative processes of the 1990s. Those are not the processes, during that time period, which come closest to a process-based conceptual operative logic. During the 1970s, Eisenman does not assign the generative processes of his works to some extraneous logic. It is his authorial subjectivity that controls the generation of form with a view to producing a specific *formal effect* – an effect that is foreign to the conceptual realm. A *formal effect* is also what is obtained when, during the 1990s, computer rationality is used to achieve the type of curvilinear forms usually called "folds" or "bubbles". Their formal eloquence, their sculptural quality, is the feature that stands out the most from its formal (and constructive) complexity – more than any generative logic (indiscernible amid such complexity). From this perspective, it is meaningful that they are referred to as "folds" and "bubbles" – terms that only emphasise their curvilinear character, that is, their *formal* characteristics. If, in the conceptual context, the logic that defines the process emerges directly from the work and becomes manifest as content of the work, in these "folds" and "bubbles" procedural logic is put at the service of the peculiar eloquence of the forms, which can thus be appreciated as if they were an old sculpture.

There were, however, other experiments during the 1990s that I believe can be more appropriately identified with the conceptual *process*. I find the following example to be particularly adequate – that of some of the projects by the Dutch collective MVRDV, formed by Winy Maas, Jacob van Rijs and Nathalie de Vries. I shall refer to projects from the beginning of their joint activity, designed between 1991 and 1997. The first projects are therefore 20 years old. All these projects share the fact MVRDV described them as the result of a process, with a sequential arrangement close to that of a narrative. In all of them, the architects created a device capable of turning the particular circumstances of each project into form-determining

factors. It is through this strategy that these projects are usually explained by their authors: as if they resulted from a number of logical, almost scientific deductions, with a seemingly incontrovertible coherence. Those projects are identified below with the epithets they were given in the book *Farmax*[204] by the architects themselves:

Shadowtown[205] is from 1993. It is a "Competition design for the Railway station area in Bergen op Zoom, The Netherlands"[206] [18 . 19]. The intervention area is close to the town's medieval centre. For this reason, it is subject to legislation that determines that new buildings must be low enough not to be visible from any point within the historic centre. This limitation determines a virtual volume inside which any construction must be contained. Naturally, all competing teams applying must comply with that volume. It conditions the proposals. Rather than just complying with it, the MVRDV collective used it as a proposal. Instead of deciding about the form of the new buildings, they used that legally imposed volume as the work's proposed form.

Noise Scape[207] is from 1997. It proposes a manner of dealing with the noise caused by motorway traffic, as an alternative to creating sound barriers with panels [20 . 21]. The proposed strategy consists in using diagrams representing noise propagation in 3D as their starting point. Each consecutive surface corresponds to a different noise level, thus forming intervals between noise level "x" and the next noise level "y". Each noise level is tolerable by certain activities. For example, in an area where noise does not exceed 65 dB(A), it is possible to build residences. For offices, the limit is 67 dB(A). Surfaces delimiting different noise levels can therefore be used as the boundaries of the space to be built according to function. MVRDV made a literal use of those surfaces as the limits for their respective construction volumes, turning the sinuous forms of the diagrams into architectural forms. In this way, they convert into an architectural form what, before, was no more than the formal translation of an abstract analysis for project support. This sort of project support material is quite common; an example of this would be the visual and *acoustic* analysis that Cedric Price uses to assess the surroundings of the residential units in his project *Steel Housing*.

Statistic Suspense[208] is from 1992. It is a large scale project for the Hoornse Kwadrant area in Delft, for the construction of a residential complex [22 . 23 . 24] – a programme subject to a great number of legal constraints, as explained by MVRDV:

> Due to the tight budgets allotted to housing, the programme for residential areas has been rendered as an 'urbanism of percentages', i.e. the combination of economy and social obligations lead to strict maximum percentages for dwelling types (100 m^2 with a maximum of three storeys, ground-access), gardens (40 m^2 per house), parking places (1.2 cars per house), pavement (30 m^2 per parking place, including roads) and greenery (5 m^2 per house).[209]

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[204] MVRDV, *Farmax: Excursions on Density*, Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1998.
[205] *Ibidem*, pp. 250-263.
[206] *Ibidem*, p. 251.
[207] *Ibidem*, pp. 492-509.
[208] *Ibidem*, pp. 596-613
[209] *Ibidem*, p. 598.

Instead of taking the data "into account", the project is directly based on it. The data is used as the subject-matter of a process. MVRDV start by organising the territory into modules according to the size of parking spaces. Then, they quantify the areas corresponding to each part of the programme (dwellings, parking, gardens, etc.) based on the number of modules necessary in order to comply with the percentages imposed. Once the legal requirements are guaranteed, the act of designing is limited to the random distribution over the territory of modules corresponding to each function. In order to control the random results, MVRDV ensures only that each house has a tower room (a raised volume) or a patio (an empty space). The purpose is that the complex and labyrinthine volumes that result from this process should create unexpected spaces, more stimulating than what would be expected due to the strict legal constraints. This is a radical way of creating the *unexpected* in the project in order to offset the also radical legal restrictions imposed. It converts the restrictions, using them as an instrument against the normalisation to which they tend to lead.

Proximity[210] is the theme given in *Farmax* to this project, better known as *Berlin Voids*. Dating from 1991, it is MVRDV's first project [25 . 26]. It is a proposal following an Europan competition regarding the construction of 284 new dwellings in Berlin-Prenzlauerberg. In view of the specific characteristics of the land parcel available to build the houses, MVRDV decided to concentrate them on a single high-rise building. This way they are able to free external space for collective use, while at the same time the building becomes part of the landscape network between the city's numerous high-rise buildings. The building resulting from this option is lamelliform. The concentration of dwellings becomes a task to be performed predominantly "in cross-section" – a task MVRDV takes advantage of in order to create a variety of dwellings. They start with the assumption that there is no such thing as an ideal house, but rather a multiplicity of ideal houses[211]. Therefore, in order to configure the building, MVRDV start by defining a series of 34 houses, all of them different. They define each of them as simultaneously interior and exterior volumes, in other words, without letting any interior division appear to break the correspondence between the outer shell and the inhabitable interior space. They call them types. In the scale model, the word "*typ*" can be read on one of the building's facades. Given the nature of the project, making use of the concept of type is provoking: there is no recognisable methodology at the basis of the purely intuitive, or ironic, definition of the 34 types of houses.

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[210] *Ibidem*, pp. 556-577.

[211] Regarding this matter, and the historical context, MVRDV wrote: "Given the increase in the number of times we move house these days (from 2.2 times per person per lifetime in 1950 to 7.8 in 1994), the feeling that a house is a temporary place to stay in increases with it. The house has become part of our 'dwelling-career' (...): everyone should have lived in a *loft* at one time, in a house on the lake, in a *squat*, a *bungalow*, a commune, alone, with kids... The demand for a greater variety and even more extreme dwelling forms is gaining momentum. The ideal home doesn't exist anymore, there are thousands of ideal houses. The permanent ideal has been supplanted by the temporary. (...) This opens up unprecedented opportunities for the role played by home catalogues. The cultivation of a maximum choice of housing types fulfils the wishes of the potential client, and covers the uncertainties of the market. This extention of the known ideals can be set up through a series of extended or extrapolated 'permutations' of the average house: this would lead from the straightforward front-to-back type to the stair type, the house with the superwindow, the house with no roof, the house with no walls, to the pit house, the catholic house, the house with the towers, the disconnected house, etcetera. All specific and characteristic spaces that wait to be inhabited, to be urbanised, to be appropriated, time and again. The housing block can be constructed as a Chinese puzzle of these ideals." *Ibidem*, p. 561.

The houses are then inserted into the blade-shaped volume, but their varied forms are not set into each other (the same happens with the also varied compartments of Adolf Loos monolithic houses, all perfectly set according to the puzzle known as *Raumplan*). Instead, the houses are "dropped" into the volume as in a poorly played Tetris game – poorly played because, apparently, their position is not controlled before falling randomly on top of the houses directly below them. This procedure results in a number of interstices between the ideal-homes, integrated as new volumes of new houses – non-ideal houses, considered as valid as the first. In contrast to simply lining up houses in order to compose a "building", here the limits of the various houses become interdependent. Each house is defined as the interstice of the others around it. In each house the volumes of the "neighbours' houses" are visible as bulges and/or recesses. According to MVRDV, this formal inter-connection may promote the desire to get to know the space inhabited by close neighbours. Additionally, the knowledge of the existing variety may promote the desire to know *all* the houses. By emphasising *proximity* (the theme of the project), architecture aims to play a role as a social catalyst – not through equality and collectivisation, but through difference and individuality.

Therapy[212] is the theme of *KBWW House*, usually called *Double House*. This is a 1997 project for the city of Utrecht – the only of the five mentioned here that actually reached the construction stage [28 . 29 . 30]. The project is for two houses that were destined to follow the model of "semi-detached houses". At first, each of the two families contacted a different architecture *atelier*: one ordered the project from MVRDV; the other one ordered from *De architectengroep*, represented in this project by Bjarne Mastenbroek. MVRDV's proposal is to abdicate from the rigidity of a party wall and, like in *Berlin Voids*, use the frontier between neighbours as the theme for the project. Instead of each family making a project in their own allotment with their own *atelier*, both families, both allotments and both *ateliers* were brought together to create a single project. This way, conditions were created for the conception of the project to consist in the series of negotiations between the families and their respective project design teams. This is the *process* leading to the definition of both houses and, at the same time, of a frontier between houses that is more rewarding for both parties (this project is sometimes illustrated with a picture of a couple kissing). About this project, MVRDV stated:

> The villa, the specially designed private house, was long synonymous with the ultimate home. Often this personal and distinctive space was unambivalent, ushering in such classic one-liners as the Palladian dome, the Wrightian salon or the Miesian hall. Under the present densifying circumstances the need for personal houses is being challenged by ever more intense negotiations with the city, civil servants, amenities authority, fire brigade, acoustical engineers, neighbours, ecologists. But all this enforced negotiation, in which the architect is finding himself more and more in the role of a middle-man or a therapist, has given rise to spaces that are more opulent, more unexpected and therefore more extreme that the classical paradigms.
> (...)

[212] *Ibidem*, pp. 578-597.

> Interpreting the partition wall between neighbours as a 'therapeutic first move' towards negotiations has given birth to two interlocking dwelling-volumes, each richer than the assumption underlying them both. (...) extreme differences can coexist: where the one occupant wants to be surrounded by the garden, the other can withdraw to the piano nobile. Where the one chooses a salon just past the children's playrooms, the other opts for a work- cum bedroom upstairs, and so on.[213]

After choosing to build the construction volume upwards in order to free more space for the garden at the back, the process for defining both houses consists of the records of the negotiation between the families, which led to the definition of a programme for each house (location and dimensions of the various spaces) and also the progressive distortions of the frontier dividing them.

A different process is activated to produce each of these projects. In order to summarise the several operative strategies invented by MVRDV, I propose to organise them in the following table. For each project, I identify: the object of the process (what is to be done); data (decisive context elements); operative framework created (framework created for decision-making); process procedures (how decisions are made), agents of decision (who decides about the form) and, lastly, the result (form).

project	**object of process** (what is to be done)	**data** (decisive context elements)	**operative framework created** (framework created for decision-making)	**process procedures** (how decisions are made)	**agents of decision** (who decides about the form) ↓ **result** (form)
Shadow Town Bergen ob Zoom 1993	define the outline of a volume	**project constraints**: legal restrictions determining that the construction volume to be defined cannot be visible from the historic centre.	**adoption** of the device intended to aid enforcement of the regulation, in other words, the device that specifies the lines of sight to be applied.	**perfunctory** graphic procedure	regulations (legal) ↓ volume with an unpredictable upper outline
Noise Scape 1997	define the outline of a volume	**project constraints**: noise (levels) emissions due to the traffic	**adoption** of the device intended to aid enforcement of the regulation, in other words, the device that specifies the different noise levels per zone	**perfunctory** graphic procedure	regulations (environmental) ↓ volume with an unpredictable form
static suspense **Hoornse Kwadrant,** Delft 1992	distribute a number of urban components over a portion of territory	**project constraints**: percentages of area allocated to each function on the plan	**creation** of a device: orthogonal matrix for the distribution	**random** distribution	chance ↓ unpredictable distribution for urban components
proximity **Berlin Voids** 1991	distribute a number of pieces inside a volume	**project circumstances**: neighbourhood relations between a number of dwellings	**creation** of a device: orthogonal matrix for the distribution	**random** distribution	chance ↓ unpredictable interstices (the "tetris errors"
Therapy Double House, Utrecht 1995	define the dividing line between two houses inside a volume	**project circumstances**: neighbourhood relations between two families	**creation** of a device: negotiation per cross-section, floor by floor	negotiation **subjective**	both families ↓ unpredictable dividing line

[213] *Ibidem*, p. 582.

In each of these projects, the choice of theme and the respective methodology results from a process of analysis. In order to create a specific strategy – or a specific *process* – for each circumstance, MVRDV start off based on the actual circumstance. They don't offer resistance to it. On the contrary, what they do is obey the impositions in such a literal manner that they convert that obedience into invention. In the words of Stan Allen,

> Creativity is not expressed as the invention of new forms, but as the re-formulation of existing constraints. By describing a problem in a new way, an unexpected solution emerges.[214]

MVRDV operate with extreme pragmatism – a pragmatism that generates a type of poetry easily identifiable with conceptual art. Works become devices that do no more than mirror the context and, in that sense, there is also an authorial withdrawal by the architects, in favour of external factors. While interviewing MVRDV in 1998 for the *El Croquis* magazine, Luis Moreno Mansilla and Emilio Tuñon enunciate this mode of operation by stating that, in it, "(...) sublime pragmatism replaces artistic intuition (...)"[215].

Despite this procedural strategy being common to the five projects mentioned, there is a difference between the first three and the last two.

- The last two both deal with neighbourhood relationships – relationships that are not taken for granted, but rather as the subject of invention. Neighbourhood is the theme of the project; the process produces a neighbourhood device (in a physical sense).
- The first three are more radical in terms of capitalising on what each project circumstance provides. They are based on data that is usually faced not only as a circumstance, but also as *adversities* relative to the creative process ("process" understood here in the broad sense) – data that is usually viewed as factors against which architects are forced to "fight" when designing their projects. In these three projects, more than *circumstance*, it is *adversity* that is seen as an opportunity.

The fact that the data being dealt with has different levels of objectivity is not unrelated to this difference. The type of data encouraging the process determines the nature of the project itself.

Since what I intend to discuss here is *the possibility of the authorial focus shifting from form to the device that determines the form*, I propose to compare the nature of these processes (according to the information summarised in the table above) specifically around the question: *what*, or *who*, is the decision-maker in each process?

In the first three projects, data being dealt with possesses a mathematical objectivity. Both the regulations that the project must obey (invisibility of the construction from the historic centre, or the percentages of different urban elements), and the limitations that characterise the intervention environment

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[214] Stan Allen, "Ecologías Artificiales: El Trabajo de MVRDV / Artificial Ecologies: The Work of MVRDV", *El Croquis* 86 (1998), p. 27.
[215] Luís Moreno Mansilla & Emilio Tuñon, "El Espacio del Optimismo: Una Conversación con Winy Maas, Jacob van Rijs y Nathalie de Vries / The Space of Optimism: A Conversation with Winy Maas, Jacob van Rijs and Nathalie de Vries", *El Croquis* 86 (1998), p. 10.

(the noise of motorway traffic), are quantifiable. They can be translated into geometry and numbers. In all of them, the process goes through what was designated as the "accomplishment of the constraints". If there are regulations that must be obeyed, MVRDV apply them literally, thus finding the *concrete* limit that those regulations lead to. After that, the three projects vary:

- In the two first – *Shadow Town* and *Noise Scape* – the result obtained is awarded the status of work. What was meant simply as the boundaries into which the solution was to fit turns into the solution itself. Who decides? The regulations themselves.
- In the third – *Hoornse Kwadrant* – what the regulations determine is not enough. The regulations involved in the two previous projects have spatial implications that are precise enough to be translated directly into a configuration, that is, into a form. In one of the projects, the lines of sight drawn from the historic centre define the form of the building's rooftop (above which the construction would be visible). In the other, the surfaces limiting the different noise levels define a specific volume and, within that volume, the distribution of the programme. In *Hoornse Kwadrant*, the regulations do not translate into a configuration of space, but rather into constraints on that configuration. It is therefore necessary to create a device that can translate regulations into a configuration. For this purpose, MVRDV create a modular matrix that serves as the basis of the configuration and later, based on the dimensions of that matrix, they create a number of pieces to be distributed. An orthogonal matrix is created, similarly to what LeWitt did in some of his works. The difference is that, while the artist uses the matrix to implement redundant logics, the architects use it as the basis for randomness. Who decides? According to the accounts provided by its authors, it is chance.

In the last two projects, on the theme of neighbourhood, the game is less objective. The first of those projects – *Berlin Voids* – has many similarities with the *Hoornse Kwadrant* I just mentioned. Here also there is an orthogonal matrix used as the reference for random distribution. However, the pieces to be distributed are not determined by any sort of rule. They are invented by MVRDV, with relative fictional freedom. Only the distribution manages to escape authorial subjectivity and is left to chance. Finally, *Double House* is different to the other projects when it comes to the agents of decision. Its future residents are the decision-makers. More than anything else, the architects define the procedural framework – the "game" – that incorporates the decisions to be made by *other people*. The architects define that what will be managed is an indoor space, contained within a given volume, and that this management involves defining, in cross-section and one storey at a time, who gets which area.

These cases are meant to serve merely as an example. This does not allow general principles to be established. However, it is possible to identify certain trends within these five projects.

The process procedures I described here are progressively open to subjectivity, starting with the projects towards the top of the table – those that, as I stated, are based on mathematical data – down to the *Double House*, which results from a process based on wishes. It is clear that the higher the subjectivity

of the processes, the greater the need to create an operative framework where subjectivity can be incorporated. The *Double House* involves a more complex process. The "game" has more rules to it. It became necessary to determine that the negotiation was to take place in cross-section and that the object of negotiation was the position of the frontier between both houses, one storey at a time. Only this way could a game be open to the wishes of the two families. In *Hoornse Kwadrant* and *Berlin Voids*, the operating framework is lighter but equally necessary. The creation of formal matrices is the only way of enabling the process to open up to randomness. Only the establishment of a game can provide the basis for admitting chance. This complexity contrasts with the directness of the processes in the first two projects, where there wasn't even the need to create an operative framework. The definition of "what is to be done" is enough to turn everything else that needs to be done into a merely perfunctory task: the graphic realisation of the procedural principle established earlier.

Therefore, these MVRDV processes can be classified between the two ends of the spectrum – two process paradigms I would like to enunciate by referring to two architects – Hugh Ferriss and Yona Friedman.

Ferriss is one of the lead characters in the bestseller *Delirious New York*, published by Rem Koolhaas for the first time in 1978. I have mentioned his activity as a New York skyscraper project designer because of the experiments he performs as a result of the 1916 Zoning Law. In view of the several constraints aiming to ensure due lighting of scrapers and the streets below, Ferriss defines construction volumes directly deduced from those constraints and regulations [16]. As Koolhaas explains, "This research centers on the unexplored potential of the 1916 Zoning Law and the theoretical envelope on each Manhattan block"[216]. Although Ferriss elaborates his projects a little further, going beyond strict deduction, the project strategy he invents is procedural.

For his turn, Friedman conceives a process that, instead of being performed by the author himself, is made available to others so that they can achieve concrete results themselves. This is a project device Friedman developed for Expo '70, the universal fair that took place in Osaka, which he called *Flatwriter*[217] [31 . 32]. Friedman's intention is that each resident should be able to determine the configuration of their own house (one of his work themes since the late 1940s) and, in order to make that possible, he creates a system that he describes as follows:

> The Flatwriter keyboard consists of 53 keys, each printing the figure shown upon it. They represent configurations possible within three volumes as well as the different forms that can be assumed by each volume. These choices are predicated by a framework of existing stocks of prefabricated elements, service units, bathroom and kitchen units, and by the location of each within the house structure. Costs are also computed for each selection. It is thus possible for any future resident of a neighbourhood to print his preferences for an apartment. He does this by utilizing a simple code that visualizes all elements involved in his decision in

[216] Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1994, pp. 113-114.
[217] "Flatwriter is the result of the appropriation of "*typewriter*" – a word in which the particle "*type*" is substituted for "*flat*" as the prefix for "*writer*". Friedman explained that he uses this word to distinguish his system from the systems applicable to computers and software.

> such a way that his decision is easily comprehended by the constructor as well as by all other residents of the future neighbourhood.
>
> (...)
>
> The keyboard of the Flatwriter contains: all possible linkages and configurations of the three distinct volumes (three volumes used here to simplify explanations and illustrations); all shapes any of the volumes can have (depending on the given technological context); all possible positions for a package kitchen, bathroom or any special equipment; all climatic orientations the apartment can have.[218]

The results obtained with the *Flatwriter* are limited by the matrix governing the combinations permitted by the system, in the sense that it predetermines the partial options that, as a whole, will configure each house. But this provides the basis enabling obtaining results to be shifted to a point in time subsequent to the definition of the enunciation, and to the hands of others. Friedman invents the game but he doesn't play it; he invents it so that others can.

Both Ferriss and Friedman dispense with the decision about the work's form. Instead of "designing", they both resort to form-defining devices.

Ferriss uses a device created by others; Friedman creates a device so that others can use it.

Ferris plays an existing game and awards the status of form to the result obtained; Friedman invents a game in which the results will be dictated by external factors.

Ferriss adopts a determinist process as a way of finding a form he does not predict; Friedman creates a process that is open to randomness.

These two examples could be placed respectively at the top and at the bottom MVRDV's list of processes, acting as a reference. In my opinion, they define the two paradigms of the procedural universe in which MVRDV operate. *Shadowtown* (which, as other MVRDV projects, results from the literal application of Ferriss' method) and *Noise Scape* are closer to Ferriss, while *Berlin Voids*, *Hoornse Kwadrant* and the *Double House* are closer to Friedman.

MVRDV's processes are very distant from Eisenman's or Fujii's. I propose comparing them next. The argument has been brought to this point so that, through this comparison, some conclusions may be reached as to the feasibility of a conceptual process within the field of architecture project design. It should be noted that this comparison may seem somewhat irrelevant from a historiographical perspective. MVRDV's first work (*Berlin Voids*, 1991) is performed more than fifteen years after the works by Fujii mentioned here, which are from 1975, and almost thirty years after Eisenman's first house, from 1968. MVRDV operate in a context of response to the "languages" crisis, while Eisenman and Fujii are interested above all in phenomena related to the construction of meaning – a theme that is characteristic of a time

[218] Yona Friedman, *Pro Domo*, Barcelona: Actar / Junta de Andalucía, Consejería de Cultura, 2006, p. 130-132.

focused on "architecture as a language"[219]. These are very distinct contexts of architectural culture. Nevertheless, this discrepancy will be disregarded here, at least in terms of its most specific historical implications. Since operative issues are at stake here – the "procedural way of doing" in itself – I believe this comparison will be useful, even if established in an *a-historical* manner.

In as far as concerns their appearance, Eisenman's and Fujii's projects show formal similarities with LeWitt's sculptures, while MVRDV do not. This similarity is clear in Fujii's projects, even more so than in Eisenman's houses. It is due to several factors: (1) The forms are reduced to the most basic geometry. (2) Basic geometric forms are used as a starting point, principally to emphasise the manipulation those forms are subject to. (3) The manipulation of forms is based on a repetition/variation principle. (4) The manipulation of forms is guided by criteria that relate mostly to the form itself (when I say "mostly" I mean to emphasise the programme constraints to which Fujii is subject). Tending to be free of the iconographic values History gives them, forms are manipulated as a critical approach to the phenomenon of manipulation itself. (5) The manipulation of forms aims at a "laboratory" experiment focusing on perception and cognition as processes involved in the construction of the work's meaning.

As has been demonstrated, from a strictly procedural perspective, the difference between Fujii's and LeWitt's seriality seems to be the fact that, unlike the artist's procedures, those performed by the architect are not predetermined.

For their turn, the MVRDV projects analysed here are not generally based on a repetition/variation principle. That is not the aspect they depend on to be identified with conceptual processes. The idea of creating a "device capable of determining the form of the work" does not imply that such a device acts in a serial manner, producing serial works. MVRDV's projects are closest to LeWitt's proposals from a strictly *procedural* perspective, or, in other words, because they are generated by a self-sufficient device.

Hence there is a fundamental difference between Fujii's and MVRDV's processes:

- Fujii's processes aim at the internal logic of the architectural object. This explains the relative formal similarity between Fujii's projects and LeWitt's sculptures. They are both reduced to basic geometric forms because it is in that same geometric condition that they are used in laboratory research to construct a discourse about the *organisation of the forms* of objects (despite the fact that that organisation is merely a starting point for the meaning of the discourse), just as chemical elements are used to discover the laws that rule their combination (although in art and architecture the research is conducted less objectively).
- MVRDV's processes are based on factors external to the object. The configuration of the projects reflects factors that are related to the configuration of the architectural form in its most empirical

[219] In the North American academic context, this difference can be viewed as placing "post-critical" or "projective architecture" (that of MVRDV) face to face with "critical architecture" (that of Fujii and of Eisenman).

dimension. It is not geometry or linguistics, but rather the social and environmental conditions that provide the framework for professional practices. The "project" is viewed as a set of procedures, but especially as a system of interactions between the factors to be considered and the agents (in this sense, MVRDV fit into a particular tradition of *diagrammatic projects*, according to which the diagram establishes a network of interactions that will lead to the project or building. This modern tradition can be illustrated by a diagram where Cedric Price establishes the network of interactions which would eventually bring about his *Fun Palace*[220] [62]. As will be shown later, Price radicalises the possibility of defining the project as a system of interactions to the point where the project consists mostly of that system, as opposed to establishing a form.)

On another note, one could also argue that:

- Operating within the object, Fujii does not exactly define self-sufficient devices for the determination of form because he must intervene in the process, *making decisions that condition the results of that process*, in order to meet functional requirements.
- MVRDV define self-sufficient devices for determination of form, leaving the result of the process to external factors.

This data raises the questions: can the architecture project only acquire a truly procedural profile (in a conceptual acceptation) if the object becomes a reflection of its external context, as understood empirically? Are processes focusing *strictly* on the internal logic of the object's *formal* definition, as in the most radically serial works, not possible in architecture?

In theory, they are. It would suffice that *indifference* should be accepted regarding functional aspects, in the manner that they are usually considered.

Architects tend to take the axiom "form follows function" into consideration. Even those who do not prescribe functionalist radicalism relate to it in some way. It conveys a certain "wisdom" even for those who, although without following it dogmatically, use it merely as a reference and create spaces where use *also* determines their function. In order to move the decision about the space to a purely formal territory, it would be necessary that this axiom were ignored. It would be necessary that the process should not require control during its development for the result to guarantee, for example, that certain spaces are of a certain size so that they can perform a certain function.

This is clearly not what happens with the perfectly hierarchically organised spaces in Eisenman's houses, nor what happens even in Fujii's processes, which consist of little more than repeating a single form to configure the various spaces in a building. In theory, these architects deviate from function in order to isolate the issue of form – in order to purge the project from other factors, different from the procedures of

[220] Cedric Price Archive, Canadian Centre of Architecture (Montreal), drawing nr. DR1995:0188:246. Courtesy of researcher Cidália Silva.

manipulation of form. But, in truth, function is transformed, if not into a necessary evil, at least into a conditioning factor that it is *also* necessary to address when the author is principally thinking about the rules of construction of the object and the consequent phenomena related to construction of meaning. Fujii also has to condition the process in order to guarantee "specialised" spaces. In *Todoroki House*, for example, spaces of smaller dimensions are created to hold sanitary and other facilities[221]. If functional logic is not abandoned, it requires that the process should be controlled during its development, imposing procedures that LeWitt would consider "expressionist" (that is, taking place during the process). This is exactly why Fujii's projects (not to mention Eisenman's) cannot be considered *conceptual processes*.

The argument, therefore, leads us to examine the possibility of a process being indifferent to functional aspects.

Although it may seem unorthodox, this possibility can be related with common phenomena. One could state all the situations where a given use is implemented on spaces of which the formal genesis is not related to that use. It is related to *another* use. *The Limelight*, the famous nightclub, was installed in New York in 1983 at the Church of the Holy Communion, built in 1845 according to Richard Upjohn's neo-gothic project. In 2004, I had the opportunity to visit a budget shoe shop in Barbès, Paris, installed in an old theatre. Besides the ground level, where the audience would sit, the business also occupied an upper level, where the balcony used to be. The shoe shop was therefore installed at a privileged location in a "place with double floor-to-ceiling height with an overhanging gallery". Maybe these examples are a little eccentric. But there are common examples: many convents and palaces are today the location of government agencies, and *lofts* are industrial spaces used as residences. With regard to *lofts*, it is particularly clear that their condition comes precisely from the disparity between form and function. It is that inequality that leads to a situation where use has to be invented – which leads to improvisation and spontaneity. This discourse has been instituted in architectural theory for several decades but it can be clearly illustrated through a text by Friedman called "Function Follows Form"[222]. Friedman states that:

> The function of each architectural space is determined, first of all by the equipment specific for the space: furniture and fixtures.[223]

Paradoxically, out of the works mentioned up to this point, it is in the MVRDV projects that one finds the processes that are closest to this disjunction between formal genesis and use. This is what MVRDV experiment with in the *Berlin Voids* project and also, in a different way or another scale, in *Hoornse Kwadrant*. In the first project, non-ideal houses are configured through a random, purely formal logic. They

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[221] I disagree with Kaji-O'Grady, when the author states that "Neither (...) Eisenman or Fuji have explored the potential serialism holds for involving aspects of architectural program, experience and inhabitation as additional parameters. Programmatic space is what occurs within the form and does not impinge upon it.". Kaji-O'Grady, *Serialism in Art and Architecture*, pp. 162-163.
[222] Yona Friedman, "Function Follows Form", in Jonathan Hughes & Simon Sadler (eds.), *Non-Plan: Essays on Freedom Participation and Change in Modern Architecture and Urbanism*, 2nd edition, Oxford: Architectural Press, 2002, pp. 104-115.
[223] *Ibidem*, p. 104.

argue that those unexpected spaces are as inhabitable as others, ironically considered to be canonical. In the second project, public areas and residential volumes are configured randomly, in order to ensure the variety of both as well as the relationship between them.

I used the term "paradoxically" because, based on the analysis I have been making, namely regarding MVRDV's projects, there are two apparently contradictory facts:

1. Conceptual processes act on the internal logic of objects. It is within that scope that either an eventually redundant rationality or a pure randomness is operated. These are the two modes, at the fringe of the absence of "logic", that allow withdrawing authorial subjectivity from the configuration of form and transposing it, as I have stated, to the definition of a self-sufficient device for the definition of form. The device can only work within these two subjectivity-free fields: mathematical tautology and chance. MVRDV operate within these fields in these two projects. They adopt operative strategies which, by themselves, are rooted in the tradition of the "autonomous object". They act through "ways of doing" typical of a tradition in which Buchloh includes LeWitt, stating that,

> It seems that LeWitt's proto-conceptual work of the early 1960s originated in an understanding of the essential dilemma which has haunted artistic production since its oppositional paradigms were formulated in 1913: on the one hand to systematically reduce and empirically verify the perceptual data of a visual structure, and on the other hand, to randomly attribute a new "idea" or meaning to an object (...) as though the object were an empty (linguistic) signifier. [which Buchloh identifies with what Barthes calls "poetry"].[224]

2. MVRDV do not work on the internal logic of objects. They are not interested in questioning geometry as an instrument or field for the production of meanings, or even as a signifier entity. They are interested in using it to speculate about the function architecture can have as a support to be *inhabited*; that is, to speculate about the way how forms condition and promote day-to-day gestures, personal relationships, etc. (such as neighbourhood relationships). In this context, geometry is used not so much to generate communication devices, to be perceived through "reading" – forms to be examined. Rather, it is used in order to invent inhabitation devices, to be perceived through their use – forms to be experienced. For them, form is just a means, not an end.

In short, MVRDV resort to object-centred conceptual strategies in order to, through those strategies, produce projects centred on use. This apparently contradictory situation highlights a fact that is fundamental in order to consider the possibility of creating self-sufficient devices for the determination of form in architecture: *the departure from form-generating processes to purely formal logics* (such as mathematical redundancy or randomness) *implies the suppression of functional logic, but this suppression of functional logic is, in truth, an option that, in architecture, is not limited to the scope of the logic for construction of the form. On the contrary, in architecture that option has a deep value as a manifest about its own function.* What option

[224] Buchloh, "From the Aesthetic of Administration to Institutional Critique", p. 42.

could be more centred on function than the "exclusion of functional precepts"? The speculative reach of these works resides precisely in that exclusion. Without it, the adoption of conceptual strategies is not left to decisions external to the subject, and is inevitably contaminated by small decisions that guarantee the fulfilment of functional precepts, as happens in Fujii's projects and, even more so, in Eisenman's.

As a factor defining of architecture, the existence of function implies that the self-sufficient devices for the determination of architectural form have this particularity – inevitably functional implications – that sets them apart from those of conceptual art.

I would like to raise an objection to the argument I just presented, even if only to be able to refute it. It is related with the fact that the different projects mentioned here have different focuses, that is, each of these processes serve to define a different aspect of the work's form. Such a difference could compromise the legitimacy of their comparison.

Eisenman and Fujii aim to define the project with regard to all of the elements that define space in terms of its geometry – its frontiers, openings and connections. For MVRDV, the focus of their processes varies, but with the exception of the *Double House*, the scale of the decisions made through a conceptual process is more general. Specifically on the two projects exploring randomness, the definition concerns only the volumes of a number of houses, whether to conform a lamelliform building, in the case of *Berlin Voids*, or to conform the spread of a residential area, in *Hoornse Kwadrant*. The other two projects mentioned – *Shadowtown* and *Noise Scape* – do not go beyond the definition of a very generic volume. In view of this disparity, one could say that a comparison between the projects of Eisenman or Fujii and those of MVRDV is not justified, because the dissimilar cannot be compared. The former reach a degree of definition of form that the latter do not. However, I believe the right conclusion is precisely the opposite of that: *in architecture, under project circumstances, to assemble a self-sufficient device for the definition of form also involves finding a field for the configuration of the work where such an assembly becomes possible*.

I will now conclude the discussion about the adoption of procedural strategies in architecture. In short, I have reached three conclusions:

(1) It is impossible to create purely formal processes in architecture. Procedural strategies strictly centred on form imply a departure from functional logic – a departure that in itself has great functional value.

This conclusion, resulting to a large extent form the argument I have developed here, is the most relevant in this sub-chapter. It is this conclusion that basically determines which territory allows the creation of conceptual processes in architecture. There are also two other conclusions that contribute to characterise this territory:

(2) The two paradigms that delimit the processes dealing with empirical aspects are:

- the *adoption* of an existing determinist process (the paradigm I identified with Ferris' "normative" skyscrapers);
- the *creation* of a process open to randomness (the paradigm I identified with Friedman's *Flatwriter*).

(3) It is not possible for a process to focus on all aspects of a project of architecture. Given the multiple aspects and scales of decision a project implies, the procedural strategies can be activated only in specific scopes of decision. To establish a procedural strategy means, first and foremost, to define the theme of the project about which procedural decisions will be made. Only in view of the theme does it become possible to invent an operative framework open to decisions external to authorship.

Idea

The “idea” is the theme for this sub-chapter. In line with the structure of the previous chapter, I now propose to look into the acceptation of “idea” in the specific scope of architecture projects. I shall start off by mentioning what it means to apply a discoursive conception – which is the scope of the conceptual idea – to an activity traditionally as visualist as architecture projects. After this, I shall analyse more specifically what an idea in architecture can be, applying the same quadripartite classification I proposed for conceptual art. Finally, based on a diagnosis about the project’s technical complexity, I shall (1) discuss the particularities of the idea within the scope of the project and (2) discuss in what manner the multiplicity of factors involved in a project can be compatible with obtaining an enunciable work.

I shall not add anything regarding the definitions of “enunciation” (the form that the idea acquires when explained by its author) and “concept” (the universe of assumptions which sustain the practice and evaluation of art or, in this case, of architecture), seeing that its transposition to the scope of architecture does not entail any novelties in relation to what I stated earlier about conceptual art.

Commonly, the use of the term “idea” in the scope of architecture relates to the somewhat obscure statement that a project is sustained by a “strong and synthetic intention”. In addition to being imprecise, this phrase fails to reflect what “idea” means in the realm of the conceptual.

Just as in the history of art, the word “idea” dates back a long way in the history of architecture. It dates back to Vitruvius (*ideae*) and is an integral part of classicist culture. In that specific context, the term “idea” is used to refer either to an *ideal* entity which the form, imperfect and contingent, attempts to represent; or to refer to an intention that the artist builds mentally and regarding which they seek the *form* that best conveys it (and only form allows this). According to the first of these possibilities – Platonic – the artist is placed in the position of transmitting an ideal that is greater and, therefore, external to them. According to the second – Aristotelian – the artist transmits a construction that they themselves generated (even if through a pre-established code, as is the case with the “classical language” of architecture), seeking a determined sensory or emotional effect. I will not deal with this theme here because it would be of little use to clarify what, in architecture, might be considered an “idea” in the conceptual sense. These two acceptations of idea use form as a vehicle of representation.

On the other hand, the adoption of forms contrary to representation does not lead just by itself to the territory of the “idea”. For example, the adoption of abstract forms within the modern movement does not constitute an approximation to the conceptual idea. I will not discuss at this point whether the forms of the rationalist code or the forms of neoplasticism perform a mimetic function regarding the formal universe of machines. Even admitting that they exclude “representation”, they still assume that the architect's artistic

activity consists in the search for a *design* (form) through *drawing* (instrument)[225]. Conversely, the possibility of a conceptual operativity within the scope of project practice implies – and this is a crucial assumption – that the definition of the project is *discoursive*, and not *formal*.

The "project" as an autonomous entity, in the manner devised by Alberti, does not have a discoursive nature. The operative tradition inaugurated in the Renaissance is based on the possibility of defining "what the construction will supposedly become" through data of a *formal* nature. What is actually defined is "the form the project has" and not "what the project is". This is what justifies the privileged use of the drawing. And this is also the reason why verbal or numerical elements that often integrate the project are themselves of use in describing the form.

I began this chapter by stating that the conceptual nature of a project can only arise from the manner in which that project is achieved, and not simply from the fact that it defines what the construction will supposedly become. In architecture, an "idea" defines what the *project* is, and not what the *construction* will become (that is the purpose of the project itself). In view of this assumption, it is clear that the drawings that compose the project (which result from the architect's work and constitute an instrument for the interface with the possible construction) are, in themselves, external to the scope of conception – a scope that may in fact take up conceptual features. This may look like stating the obvious, but it comes into conflict with another widely accepted assumption: that "what architects produce are drawings". Considering the possibility that an architecture project is of a conceptual nature requires, first and foremost, the assumption that the architect's activity may be developed in a discoursive and not (at least directly) visual field. It, therefore, implies the departure from a tradition deeply rooted in architectural culture based on the hegemony of the design/drawing:

(1) design as a criterion for the artistic valuation of the project

The *design* – as a thing in itself, sculptural, and also as a space-defining element – is viewed as the *locus* of the project's artistic quality.

(2) drawing as a way of operating

The *drawing* – as a practice of figurative approximation to form – is the means used to generate that quality.

Note, for example, what Michael Graves wrote about drawing:

> One could ask if it is possible to imagine a building without drawing it. Although there are, I presume, other methods of describing one's architectural ideas, there is little doubt in my mind of the capacity of the drawn image to depict the imagined life of a building. If we are ultimately discussing the quality of architecture which results from a mode of conceptualization, then certainly the level of richness is increased by the component of inquiry derived from the art of drawing itself. Without the discipline of

[225] The Portuguese term "*desenho*" is employed in the original version of this dissertation. It is the equivalent of the well-known Italian term "*disegno*" employed by Alberti, and it is equally ambivalent. As Mark Linder explains, the word refers simultaneously to "(...) drawing and design, a thing and a concept, an artifact and an act, a physical and a mental operation". Mark Linder, "Drawing, Literally", em Michiel Riedijk (ed.), *Architecture As a Craft: Architecture, Drawing, Model and Position*, Amsterdam: Sun, 2010, p. 37.

> drawing, it would seem difficult to employ in the architecture the imagined life which has been previously recorded and concurrently understood by virtue of the drawn idea.[226]

This excerpt is quoted by Edward Robbins in his book *Why Architects D*raw. It is the testimony of an architect regarding the ineluctability of drawing in architecture – drawings that are an asset to even that "architecture that results from methods of conceptualisation".

The transposition of "data that defines what the project is" to the scope of digital languages alters the practice of drawing in its technical aspects, but does not significantly alter this framework of values. Also regarding this theme, I should like to mention the book that Mario Carpo has just published, titled *The Alphabet and the Algorithm*[227]. Carpo centres his argument on the relationship between *means of production* (he is particularly interested in the end of mechanical reproduction and the start of computer-aided production) and *means of conception* (he is particularly interested in the development of digital processes). Carpo claims the end of the Albertinian paradigm according to which (1) the architect fixes the form with absolute "authorial authority", and (2) the realisation of the form is all the more correct when it more closely follows the notations with which the architect establishes the form. In contrast to this paradigm, for Carpo, computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided manufacturing (CAM) now permit, on the one hand, that production is no longer based on the mechanistic principle of exact repetition and, on the other hand, that authorship is shared with agents other than architects or designers.

Specifically concerning the type of data that defines the work, Carpo refers to the different types of notation that are used by Alberti to establish the autonomy of the project as a product of the artistic work of the architect, considering that these notations are now rendered obsolete due to digital means. Along the same line of reasoning, Carpo, even if unintentionally, identifies a fact relevant for the discussion that I propose here: traditional visual enunciations are replaced by new, *equally visual,* enunciations. After illustrating the different types of recognition of "authenticity" using the examples of (manual) signatures, (mechanically reproduced) paper money and credit cards (the recognition of which is non-visual), Carpo writes about the current traffic of digital images:

> The digital file is the same for all. But each eventuation of that file (in this instance, each conversion into a picture) is likely to differ from the others, either by chance (some recipients may have different machines and applications), or by design (some recipients may have customized their machines or may deliberately altered the picture for viewing or printing). Some of this customizable variability certainly existed in the good old days of radio and television, and even of mechanically recorded music. But the degree of variability (indeed interactivity) that is inherent in the transmission and manipulation of digital signals is incomparably higher. We may well send the same digital postcard to all our friends. Yet there is no way to anticipate what each of them will actually see on the screen of his or her computer or cell phone (and even less what they will see if they decide to print that picture on paper – or any other material of their choice for that matter). The loss of visual significance that is so striking in

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[226] Edward Robbins, *Why Architects Draw*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 1994, p. 47 [originally published in: Michael Graves, "The Necessity for Drawing: Tangible Speculation", *Architectural Design* 6, pp. 393-394 (1977)].
[227] Carpo, *The Alphabet and the Algorithm*.

> the instance of the credit card may simply be the terminal phase of the general regime of visual variability – or sensory variability if we include other senses beyond sight that characterizes all digital environments.[228]

What Carpo refers to is the ease with which images are manipulated within digital operative fields – the ease with which (1) the data that defines the image can be altered and the ease with which (2) the transformation of that data into a concrete image can be conditioned by factors of casuistic variability or intentionally manipulated. Although it is true that the images are no longer manipulated in a *material* manner (by subjecting them, as entities that exist on a material support, to being painted, cut, collaged, etc.) and are now manipulated as a set of *abstract* data (within the scope of the digital language that defines them), in my opinion, this does not represent any deviation at all from *visuality*. This is where I disagree with Carpo. And I mention this here because I intend to demonstrate that the variability resulting from the proliferation of images has nothing to do with enunciability or with the "variation within literalness" which I consider typical of conceptual operative fields. The variability that Carpo identifies in the digital universe occurs with visual data, while conceptual variability has a discoursive entity as its reference – the idea.

From this perspective, computer language has not changed the visualist paradigm in any way.

In summary, as happens in art, operating in a conceptual manner within the scope of the architecture project means that:

- It is an idea that defines what the project is (and not a drawing, even if the idea is transposed into a drawing).
- The search for the "idea that defines what the project is" is what constitutes the architect's creative work (and not the search for a form – which can only come about as a result of the realisation of the idea).
- It is the idea that holds the artistic meaning of the project (and not the quality of the form in itself).

Some of the architects that I have referred to in my arguments provide, themselves, evidence of this departure from drawing. In 1998, talking about their work as teachers, MVRDV stated that:

> (...) we hardly teach design any more. It's not that interesting. We rather try to train students in ways of thinking or fact-finding that generate form. To set up their own 'iron logic', where something subjective like taste is less relevant.[229]

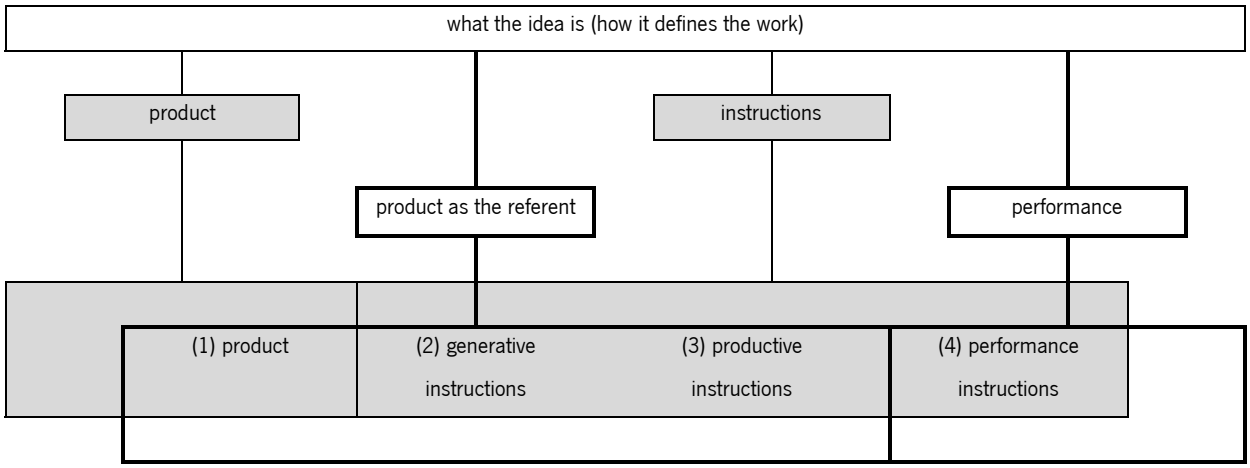
For their turn, the French duo Lacaton & Vassal[230] consider formal approaches to the project to be limiting. With regard to the work method of the French duo, Elke Krasny sums up:

> "It isn't the line that expresses the idea; it's not the line your hand draws that gives you the idea. It's precisely the other way

[228] Carpo, *The Alphabet and the Algorithm*, p. 6.
[229] Moreno Mansilla & Tuñon, "El Espacio del Optimismo, p. 20.
[230] Anne Lacaton & Jean-Philippe Vassal

around. If you know something exactly then you draw it," explains Anne Lacaton. The many possible lines that could be sketched distract the gaze from the right, essential line. "You draw a line and aren't very sure about it. Among the hundreds of lines there probably is not a single one that is the right one," stresses Jean-Philippe Vassal. The power of imagination is restricted by sketching, by every method of making something material (...).[231]

These are the assumptions that I believe serve as the framework for a conceptual idea – characterised, namely, by being *discoursive* – within the specific scope of the project. Next, I propose to determine what may more precisely be an idea in this context. For this purpose, I will refer to the diagram provided in the previous chapter, where I distinguished four types of idea in art. Bearing the contents of that diagram in mind, and particularly the four types of idea that it defines, I shall point out examples of projects that can be classified according to those types, in order to prove their applicability.



(1) product

As I said earlier, within this category we can differentiate between products defined from the ground up by the artist and products that result from the appropriation of an existing entity.

The *Blur Building*[232] of the duo Diller + Scofidio[233] is an example of an idea for a product invented by architects – an idea that can be enunciated as "a mechanical device that sprays the water of a lake forming a visitable cloud" [73 . 74 . 75]. This was a "pavilion" of sprayed water that the New York duo designed for Expo 2002 and was installed at Lake Neuchâtel, in Western Switzerland, taking its material from the lake. It sprays 5 000 litres of water per minute, through 31 400 outlets, forming a cloud approximately 100 m long, 60 m wide and 20 m high. Besides introducing an event in the landscape, this architectural installation provides whoever visits it with a perceptual experience marked by the difficulty of vision and some disorientation. (I shall return to this work later, namely to ask to what extent it can be considered architecture.)

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[231] Elke Krasny, "Suspicious Towards Tools", em Elke Krasny (ed.), *The Force Is the Mind: The Making of Architecture* (exhibition catalogue), Basel/Boston/Berlin: Birkhäuser, 2008, p. 79.
[232] See: Diller + Scofidio, *Blur: The Making of Nothing*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002.
[233] Elizabeth Diller & Ricardo Scofidio

The *House in Coutras*, conceived in 2000 by Lacaton & Vassal results from a strategy of appropriation[234] [94 . 95 . 96]. This house is basically made up of two greenhouses that the architects picked from a catalogue in order to be installed together on a land parcel provided by the clients. One of the greenhouses acts as an outer casing for an inner volume that contains a room with a *kitchenette*, three bedrooms and a number of facilities with a bathroom. The other is left empty, like an indoor garden or the greenhouses used for social events in the 19th Century. As can be seen in many of their projects, Lacaton & Vassal propose to build at low cost, without exceeding the estimated construction cost, in order to offer those inhabiting the spaces an additional area which would not only provide for different needs over time but also encourage the invention of new uses. In this case, taking into account the seasonal variation of thermal comfort of the different areas, they propose that the *inhabiting* should be nomadic within the actual house. Despite the fact that the house is more than just that, it could be defined as "two greenhouses" – a definition to which one can add that "one contains a volume of residential spaces, the other remains empty".

(2) generative instructions

All the MVRDV projects that I have already mentioned, like Friedman's *Flatwriter*, are examples of works that start off from generative instructions. In all of them, the form of the work is reached by following a previously defined plan, in other words, through the performance of a set of instructions.

(3) productive instructions

The website www.recetasurbanas.net created by the Sevillian architect Santiago Cirugeda offers *low-tech* projects that can be appropriated and realised. In addition to the fact that these projects are made available on the internet, their general accessibility is also guaranteed through their low cost. For that purpose, Cirugeda proposes an almost exclusive use of the most basic and available materials in the market, or of recycled construction elements. On the website's menu, there's an item called "REF G. Aplicaciones" (Ref. G Applications)[235] showing other people's application of projects invented by Cirugeda.

The architectural recipes of Cirugeda tend to be explained as a set of productive instructions – similarly to the assembly manual that comes together with a product "for assembling". This is the case, for example, in the proposal for stands at an informal sports complex, generically designated as Gradas (Stands) [43]. This is a project that, originally, was carried out in association with a number of partners and implemented in an area with severe socio-economic issues. As is explained on the website, the proposal

[234] http://www.lacatonvassal.com/index.php?idp=16
[235] http://www.recetasurbanas.net/index.php?idioma=ESP&REF=8

> Includes a ball-and-stick metallic structure (LANIK)[236] from a dismountable house, 60 girder plates recovered from a scrapyard by a metalsmith, as well as miscellaneous *tortilleria*[237] and refrigeration equipment in order to allow quick assembly during the hot season.[238]

The project is illustrated by assembly diagrams and photographs taken during its execution. The fact that the instructions do not seek to achieve a project, but rather to directly obtain a constructed work (as the term "recetas" [recipes] itself reveals), approximates this type of project to Weiner's statements.

(4) performance instructions

Finally, performance instructions are included in the category of the "idea that provides a set of instructions". They do not seek to attain a material entity but stand as a work in their own right. In architecture, it is common sense that a project seeks the achievement (or at least the definition) of a material entity. Regardless of their material specificity, the entities that act as a support for daily life are *physical* entities. To contemplate the possibility of a work that is the result of performance instructions means to consider that the project exists only as a performance - and this is an attribute of the *inhabiting* in itself, and not of the entities that support it. Can the *inhabiting* in itself be considered a work of architecture? The first implication of this possibility is accepting that the agent who produces *space*, in this case through its use, is the inhabitant and not the architect. But regardless of *who* does it, what is hardest to accept is that *what* one does - inhabit - might be considered "making architecture."

I believe that there are two lines of reasoning that can provide an answer to this question. The first is based on the principle that the space is actually produced only through the *interaction* between the physical entity that we usually call "architecture" and the actions of those who use it, which we usually call "inhabiting." This line of reasoning challenges the visualist perspective architects have on architecture and provides an understanding of space as a dynamic and multisensory entity. It is the line of reasoning behind *La Production de l'Espace* (The Production of Space) by Henri Lefebvre[239], as well as supporting most of the phenomenological approaches to architecture. It also represents a questioning of the architect's authority in favour of the significance of use, which is promoted by authors such as Jonathan Hill[240]. In this regard, Friedman states that

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[236] The expression "ball and stick" refers to a structural model constituted by metallic linear models with balls in the tips. The system is marketed under the "Lanik" brand.

[237] A "tortillería" is a place where tortillas are made (a tortilla bakery).

[238] http://www.recetasurbanas.net/index.php?idioma=ESP&REF=6&ID=0036&IDM=all
Incluye estructura metálica bola-palito (LANIK) perteneciente a vivienda desmontable, 60 baldas de andamio recuperadas de chatarrería y manipuladas por experto herrero, así como diferente material de tortillería y de refrigerio para posibilitar un montaje rápido en época estival.

[239] Henri Lefebvre, *La Production de l'Espace*, 4th ed., Paris: Anthropos, 2000.

[240] In as far as concerns this final perspective regarding space, I would like to mention the work of Jonathan Hill, author of publications such as *Occupying Architecture: Between the Architect and the User* or *Actions of Architecture: Architects and Creative Users*. Jonathan Hill (ed.), *Occupying Architecture: Between the Architect and the User*, 2nd edition, London/New York: Routledge, 1999; Jonathan Hill, *Actions of Architecture: Architects and Creative Users*, London/New York: Routledge, 2003.

An unused building is nothing else than a ruin.[241]

Viewing the production of space as a result of the action of those who inhabit it is easy. It is enough to think of something as banal as a family that sets up an office in an area within their house that was conceived to serve as bedroom. There is no doubt as to the fact that this is a phenomenon of production of space through its *use*, which has the nature of a performance. But in what sense is it related to performance? What is the "performance": rearranging the furniture, or using the space in a certain way? This difference is the basis for the two lines of reasoning that I just mentioned. One is based on the assumption that "using" or "inhabiting" are architecture-producing practices in their own right. The other enables the possibility that "use" or "inhabiting" are activities that involve actual physical changes to the space. I will discuss these separately.

Use as a space-producing phenomenon is, as I said, easy to understand in view of our everyday relationship with space and how the very name we give a space depends on the actions we perform there. The issue with this line of reasoning resides primarily in affording these procedures the status of "work of architecture" when they don't involve physical changes to the space. This raises simple problems such as: how can these procedures be recognised? How can you identify them so that their status can even be questioned? There is an answer that involves the rejection of the question itself, in other words, by abolishing the very idea of "authorship" and the dissolution of artistic actions in daily practices (a dissolution that Peter Burger identifies as the purpose of the historical avant-garde movements[242]). However, this possibility implies the end of the "project" as an autonomous category, and the "project as an autonomous category" is a assumption of this dissertation. It would thus be pointless to discuss it here. Therefore, what I intend to identify are inhabiting practices that (1) can be recognised as such and (2) have a degree of intentionality that means they can be considered as a "work".

The occupancy of a cave in prehistory cannot be used as an example. In that case, a natural element becomes architecture through the use given to it - inhabiting - but such an initiative does not result, I imagine, from an intention that has the categories of "project" or architectural "work" as its references.

I propose to examine a phenomenon that became a matter of interest to architects in the late 1960s - *squatting*[243] [90 . 91]. In order to meet the requirements of the example I am looking for, the most relevant cases are those where *squatters* not only take care of inhabited buildings, but also subvert its use albeit without altering its form. The significance of the spaces is transformed by the way they are used, both functionally and symbolically, without need for any physical transformation (a process similar to what

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[241] Friedman, "Function Follows Form", p. 111.
[242] Peter Bürger, *Teoria da Vanguarda*, trad. Ernesto Sampaio, Lisboa: Vega, 1993, p. 92 [originally published in German, in 1974].
[243] Despite the reservations that surely existed around using a phenomenon whose origin is related to poverty (in the post Second World War) in the discussion around an artistic possibility, I believe that there is an aspect of squatting that clearly converges with the theme under discussion: questioning the definition of "architectural practices". On the other hand, as we shall see, squatting is also viewed, by some authors, as an activity with an artistic dimension.

happens when *The Limelight* is installed in a church). Referring to the beginning of *squatting* in England, Ben Franks writes:

> Squatters' practices (...) were drawn from wider afield, particularly from the artistic avant-gardes of Dada, Surrealism and Situationism. They incorporated aspects of the ready-made, of appropriation and détournement. Office buildings (...) were turned into delimited zones. The separation of the work-place from the residential which came with the industrial revolution and the factory system were questioned by the squatters. Building had multiple uses: cafés, print-shops and dark-rooms were placed alongside bedrooms and dormitories.[244]

As suggested in this text by Franks, production of space through its use by the squatters may transcend mere necessity and constitute artistic intent. In this way, it is possible to see *squatting* as an example of "work of performance architecture".

However, *squatting* is not very precise as an *idea* ("idea" as understood in the conceptual scope). What I designated as "performance instructions" is, in *squatting*, a mere general instruction for the appropriation of space. The profile of *squatting* derives precisely from the spontaneity with which the space is reinvented. It is also this spontaneity that precludes viewing *squatting* as a "conceptual work based on instructions": it is contrary to the previous establishment of strict instructions.

Another possible example is that of the lettrist or situationist *dérive* (drift)[245]. Although a spontaneous appropriation of space (particularly urban space) is also proposed here, even more deliberately than in *squatting*, the drift may be conditioned by instructions followed deliberately with a view to reinventing the perception and significance of spaces. Although this is an example that operates specifically at the scale of landscape and road systems, this is what occurs, as Thomas Y. Levin describes, in

> (...) the case of Debord's friend who traversed the Hartz region in Germany following blindly a map of the city of London.[246]

A map of London is used as an instruction in this case, but this instruction fulfils its liberating function because it is dysfunctional. In fact, more than architecture, *dérive* is anti-architecture. Situationist practices do not lead to questioning architecture from within architecture; they seek to liquidate architecture as an institution and, consequently, as a practice. As Jean-Louis Violeau explains,

> There could be no "Situationist architecture." The phrase was an oxymoron with neither basis nor referent. Only a "Situationist practice" of architecture was possible, and this was never actually attempted, given that all artistic practices would lose their "separateness" from everyday life, and architecture would lose its demiurgical dimension and see its "individual creativity" liquidated, made banal.[247]

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[244] Ben Franks, "New Right/New Left: An Alternative Experiment in Freedom", in Hughes & Sadler (eds.), *Non-Plan*, p. 41.
[245] See: Liber Andreotti & Xavier Costa (eds.), *Teoría de la deriva y Otros Textos Situacionistas sobre la Ciudad*, Barcelona: MACBA/Actar, 1996.
[246] Thomas Y. Levin, "Geopolítica de la Hibernación: La Deriva del Urbansimo Situacionista / Geopolitics of Hibernation: The Drift of Situationist Urbanism", in Liber Andreotti & Xavier Costa (eds.), Situacionistas, p. 118.
[247] Jean-Louis Violeau, "A Critique of Architecture: The Bitter Victory of the Situationist International", in Sarah Williams Goldhagen & Réjean

Once again, we find ourselves on a path leading to the annulment of architecture as an autonomous category – a path that departs from the assumptions of this dissertation.

It is indeed difficult to associate instructions to an activity as spontaneous and emotional as inhabiting. It is less difficult to associate them to practices where *inhabiting* involves physical changes made to the inhabited support - practices that I started off by identifying with the second line of reasoning. In this case, the performance is not only the act of inhabiting, but also the manipulation of the inhabited support involved in such act.

Some of Cedric Price's projects are particularly suitable to illustrate this possibility.

Given that the passage of time means that the buildings are subject to various demands, Price argues that those who are directly involved in those changes - the inhabitants - should determine, or progressively determine, the form. He wants architecture to provide a fun and liberating experience. The word "fun" is purposely used by Price not only to mean "entertaining" but also connoting a certain informality and unpretentiousness. This is the word used in the name of "*Fun Palace*" – the famous project developed by Price and Joan Littlewood (founder of the Theatre Workshop) between 1961 and 1972[248], regarding which Royston Landau explains:

> For Joan Littlewood and Cedric Price, it would be fun if the visitor could be stimulated or informed, could react or interact, but if none of these suited, had the freedom to withdraw.[249]

In order to meet this objective, the Fun Palace is composed of a steel structure to which the construction elements that define spaces can be provisionally attached. The set is served by a crane assisting with the tasks of moving, mounting and dismounting the various parts of the building. Price and Littlewood develop the project, making several versions of it over about eleven years – curiously, longer than the building's estimated service life, which was only ten years. It was never built. This is not what happened with a similar, if less ambitious, project – the Inter-Action Centre, built in Kentish Town, London, in 1971 and demolished in 1999 [63 . 64]. Referring to this equipment, Price explains in an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist:

> (...) for a long time there was just the concrete plinth and a spaceframe structure in which prefabricated units would be placed. That way, they could have performances or a circus on the site, even before the building was fully constructed. But in fact it was always unfinished – it could always change: adding other structures and reducing some, throughout its life.[250]

This perspective about construction that derogates the value of the object in favour of the role it is capable of playing is completed in the ephemerality of the building itself. Later in the same interview, Price states:

Legault (eds.), *Anxious Modernisms: Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture*, Montréal: CCA / Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 2000, p. 243.

[248] See Cedric Price, *The Square Book*, 2nd ed., Chichester: Wiley-Academy, 2003, pp. 56-61.

[249] Royston Landau, "A Philosophy of Enabling", in Price, *The Square Book*, p. 11.

[250] Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Interview with Cedric Price", in Cedric Price, *Re:CP*, ed. Hans Ulrich Obrist, Basel/Boston/Berlin: Birkhäuser, 2003, p. 71.

> Now it has been destroyed... and it's a good thing too![251]

The architect not only dispenses with the determination of a stable form, but also with the permanence of the work – a permanence in which, to an extent, the value of monumentality that survived the modern movement is still rooted[252].

In these projects by Price, the vitality of *inhabiting* reflects directly upon the dynamics of the inhabited support. The performance of the inhabitant and the performance of the building are merged. To inhabit involves transforming the building, and the building is there to be transformed. A machine can only fulfil its function as a machine when it is activated; the same can be said about these buildings by Price. Much like a conceptual art work of a performance nature (*Sound of Ice Melting*, for example [142]), Price's buildings only exist while they are active.

The question that remains to be asked is: what does this performance framework have to do with *instructions*? What stands out from Price's intentions is that his buildings have a ludic and liberating purpose, contrary to the establishment of any restrictions or to any sort of predictability. With regard to this, I would like to start by considering what Semih Alkan Alper wrote about the role of drawing in Price's work process:

> (...) in Price's approach the design solutions are meant to provide a playground for further possibilities, which enact the users in a reflective mode. In this sense, Price's diagrams themselves become a sort of prescriptive provisions of various probabilities and stimulate those controversially in the descriptive medium of drawing.[253]

Instead of designing *forms*, Price foresees *situations* (which is why he uses diagrams). He speculates about probabilities. This all reveals a work method with the degree of formal indefiniteness necessary for the constructed forms to remain open to variable decisions by whoever is going to inhabit them. However, this indefiniteness does have its limits. Firstly, it has the limits imposed by the need to build or, at least, to elect (1) the construction elements made available to whoever is going to manipulate them and (2) the formal and constructive system that permits manipulation. To the extent that it is he who decides about these two factors that determine what the variable form of the building may be, Price limits the inhabitant's performance. As Alkan states, he prescribes it. He imposes some *instructions* on it. He imposes an operating system, within which the interaction between inhabitant and inhabited location becomes possible.

I believe that, in as far as concerns *inhabiting*, performance instructions cannot be more restrictive than this.

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[251] *Ibidem*, p. 71.
[252] The same can be said about the Lacaton & Vassal greenhouses.
[253] Alper Semih Alkan, "Architectural Representation Beyond Visualization: Cedric Price's Diagrams of Social Imagination", in Riedijk (ed.), *Architecture As a Craft*, Amsterdam: Sun, 2010, p. 129.

Despite the architectural particularities that have been noted, the typological classification of ideas I established regarding conceptual art have revealed applicable to the project. The contours of what can be considered an "idea" in architecture involve problems of another order – problems that are not apparent in the examples I have just provided. I said, with regard to predetermined processes, that it is not possible for a process to cover *every* aspect of a project and that, in order to establish a procedural strategy, it becomes necessary to define the *specific* theme on which the process will focus. I believe that this problem also occurs in relation to the idea. Better said: I believe this problem can now be addressed generically and not only in what specifically regards ideas that are "process ideas". Is it possible for an idea to be complete in the definition of an architecture project? Can it be partial? To what extent can the focus of an idea be partial in relation to the entire project? And to what extent can it be generalist, and dispense with defining concrete aspects?

At this point of the argument, I believe it is appropriate to mention the big operative difference – resulting from the great ontological difference - that exists between visual arts and the architecture project. In very general terms, we can say that a work of art as an entity can be anything, while an architecture project cannot. Firstly, although previously I disagreed as to the essentialness of the artifact in art (evoked by Dickie), *the project of architecture aims at the artifact*. Taking the risk of stating the obvious, I must note that the project of architecture aims at the definition of physical supports for human life and often seeks to ensure climate control and / or protection for the body – objectives that can only be met through artifacts. Curiously, in his defence of this inevitability, Bernard Tschumi uses works of conceptual art as his reference. He stated:

> If [in the mid-sixties] it could be argued that the discourse about art was art and thus could be exhibited as such, the theoretical discourse about space certainly was not space.[254]

Tschumi also brings up an expression used by Spinoza in order to justify the insufficiency of the theoretical acceptation of space in an interview with Lefèbvre: "The concept of dog does not bark"[255]. (Admittedly, in architecture the materiality also can be questioned or integrated within a framework of intentions of a *conceptual* type, but the variations that may result from there, which are not decisive to this discussion, will only be addressed later).

Secondly, even if we compare works of architecture *only* with works of art that are artifacts, we can see that they are of very limited variety. If it were possible to examine all the works of architecture produced throughout human history, I believe that the variations would be relatively few. What elements make up a work of architecture? Pavements, natural things such as soil, trees or rocks, elements delimiting spaces

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[254] Bernard Tschumi, "The Architectural Paradox", in *Architecture and Disjunction*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 5th ed., 1999, p. 40.
[255] *Ibidem*, p. 48.

(which are little more than walls and slabs), devices serving as connections between spaces (which are little more than doors and windows), a few elements conditioning or promoting use, such as fireplaces or traffic signs. Tents, trailers or other mobile units could also be included in this list. But there aren't many more. The same could not be said if we were to examine all the works of conceptual art because, like all examples of *post-medium* art, they escape formal familiarity.

There is no such thing as post-medium architecture.

Why is this so? Because works of architecture are artifacts with a function – this is the most obvious reason and it is also, as I said, the reason for the inevitability of the artifact. However, at this point of the discussion, I would like to examine this setting for what it implies in terms of the process of project design. From this perspective, it is not enough to invoke the functionality of the artifacts. More than this general requirement, projects must provide a response to specific requirements of very different natures. In each project, it is necessary to *resolve* problems of different kinds. The landscape, the morphology of the site's location, the programme, the construction system, infrastructure networks, regulations, costs, the client's wishes – these are all examples of matters which architects should consider in their full complexity when they design their projects. And, more than just consider them, they must *interrelate* them in such as manner as to obtain an articulate and coherent "whole". More even than each individual factor, it is their *interrelationship* that leads to the limitation of formal and methodological possibilities of architectural design. A work of art, similarly to an artifact, can be a simple entity: a glass plate, a fan that makes a cloth flutter, or a device that measures the temperature of a room in a museum. A work of architecture is almost always a puzzle of construction elements that must be carefully organised so as to satisfy requirements of either a material or immaterial nature. A project: (1) requires that labour – that *technical chore* – and only within the scope of that labour (2) can be the object of *relatively limited* variations that add artistic value to it.

It is by considering this complexity that the "idea" and enunciability can be addressed within the scope of the architecture project.

Based on this assumption, I propose to conclude this sub-chapter along two arguments. The first relates to the specificity that the idea acquires within the scope of the project. I shall argue that, as opposed to what occurs in conceptual art, in architecture the idea can be easily classified in terms of its *content*. The second argument relates to the relationship between enunciability and the project's usual technical complexity.

Given the complexity of an architecture project, it becomes evident that it is difficult for an idea to exhaustively determine "what the project is". There will always be aspects that are beyond the defining capability of the idea. However, I do not intend to refer only to variations that, in the context of conceptual art, the realisation of a given idea permits. As I have stated, the realisation of an idea always allows for slight variations, as long as these variations do not deviate from the idea, or gain autonomy as a signifier. Instead,

I am referring to the discrepancy that, in an architecture project, can arise between the (possibly low) number of factors that the idea can define and the (possibly high) number of factors regarding which decisions must be taken. I can provide a simple example – Fujii's *Todoroki House* project. The idea of the house relates to the configuration and arrangement of spaces. It is from the observation of these aspects of the house that the idea — a generative idea – behind its form can be deduced. In this way, one discovers that the idea of the house does not include constructive definitions. What should the constructive resolution of the building be? Is building the house with bare concrete, as it is actually built, more consistent with the idea or should it rather be stuccoed and painted white?

From this argument, one concludes that some project themes are constant. They cannot be excluded. As opposed to post-medium art, where it is not important to specify *what* an idea may define, the relatively scarce range of architectural artifacts and operative limitations of the project seem conducive towards enunciating what the content of an idea in architecture might be. In this sense, the classification of types of idea established for conceptual art - based solely on the question "*how* does the idea define?" - may, in as far as regards the architecture project, be completed by another classification based on the question, "*what* does the idea define ". Following on from what I was saying regarding *Todoroki House*, I think we can establish a difference between two kinds of idea, or between two aspects of the idea:

- those that are configurative;
- those that are material/constructive.

The constitution of a work of conceptual art, as well as tending towards the "synthetic", is especially relevant for the position it occupies in the vast post-medium territory. Due to its technical profile, an architecture project inevitably implies these two aspects: the organisation of space and organisation of matter. An idea is all the more complete when it is able to merge both aspects. The two works that I mentioned earlier as the result of a "product idea" are, both of them, fairly ambivalent ideas. The definition of the *Blur Building* is both spatial and material: "cloud of sprayed water" simultaneously defines both its space and its raw material. It is a work that is close to both the synthetic and the post-medium nature of art (and therefore cannot exactly be *inhabited*). The *House in Coutras*, as a readymade object, already carries with it its own definition that is both configurative and constructive. However, it is very significant that the greenhouses that basically comprise it need to be complemented by an interior volume that encloses the most private areas of the house as well as the infrastructures necessary for the operation of a kitchen and a bathroom. The idea of the readymade dominates the constitution of the house but does not entirely comprise it.

I can provide another example: *The Environment-Bubble* that Banham enunciates, and François Dallegret executes under the form of an illustration, in the text "A Home Is Not a House"[256] [72]. This famous

[256] Reyner Banham, "A Home is Not a House", in *Design by Choice*, ed. Penny Sparke, London: Academy Editions, 1981, pp. 56-60 [originally published in *Art in America* (April 1965)]. Banham appropriates the title of a song by Dionne Warwick – who is, herself, mentioned in the text – although inverting the terms "house" and "home".

residential unit is summarily defined in the illustration as "Transparent plastic bubble dome inflated by air-conditioning output". It is comprised of a single space enveloped by a membrane at the centre of which there is a set of portable infrastructures (domestic and temperature-controlled equipment) designated as a "standard-of-living package". The Banham bubble is similar to a machine or device. It possesses a very simple constitution – which makes it such an important reference and, at the same time, makes it depart from a certain level of plausibility. It has the format of a "project enunciation", but the function it performs is closer to that of a manifest. Regardless of that caveat, it is an example of a fairly complete idea for the definition of what the work is. It is a project that never reached the level of detail that its execution might require, but where a configurative or spatial idea and a constructive or material idea coincide.

These three projects – the *Blur Building*, the *House in Coutras* and the *Environment-Bubble* – are enunciable. One can easily tell that they are "translations of the idea that defines them". Despite this common feature, the technical complexity of these projects does vary. Some are more complex (or more pragmatic) than others. The *Blur Building* serves only to provide a sensory experience. Many of the requirements that a building usually has to meet are not contemplated: the "building" does not have to ensure anything more than a base surface that can be crossed through the sprayed water. The *Environment-Bubble* is, first and foremost, a manifest. It does not delve into the vicissitudes of the execution, nor the more prosaic aspects of "inhabiting". Perhaps for that reason, these two projects are the most integrally enunciable. The *House in Coutras* is not as complete an enunciation because, as I mentioned above, the definition of spaces goes beyond what is enunciable. Besides the appropriation of a pre-existing construction, it is necessary to observe other technical procedures, in relation to the box that encloses the more conventional part of the program. Despite these differences, to the extent that the three projects are generally enunciable (they are close to the paradigm of "enunciability"), I believe that they may serve as reference to a conclusion about the framework attributed to the technical aspects of enunciable projects in general. I ask: how can the technical complexity of the project be combined with the existence of *an* idea?

As I have been saying, usually a work is enunciable when its author produces a "definition of what the work is", instead of defining the work throughout the process of its realisation. This is true for architecture, but can also take into account the operative specificity of the project. Obtaining an enunciable project implies a certain manner of dealing with the technical limitations that the project involves. In the conceptual context, the correct conciliation of the different problems implied in the project, even if supported by a certain degree of formal quality, is not sufficient to sustain the coherence of the result. The technical field of the project must be overcome, not in the sense of providing a combined response to the different partial requirements that are imposed, according to specific parameters of taste (or even obtaining a virtuous design), but rather by synthesising an idea that can define what the project is. The different factors

are therefore subordinated to the preponderance of *one* intention – the idea – capable of globally encompassing its complexity "in just one go". This does not mean that an idea covers all the aspects of the project or that some of those aspects are excluded in order to reach an idea. It simply means that an idea must be able to subordinate them to its coherence.

I shall not attempt to ascertain if the "definition of what the project is" appears after a process of conciliation of technical factors, or if the architect arrives directly at the definition, without going through such a process. I believe that this question, of a heuristic order, is not relevant to assess whether a project is enunciable. For the purposes of this discussion, the only thing that matters is if the project can, or cannot, be reduced to a definition – the idea.

The projects I have mentioned realise ideas that are simultaneously configurative and material. They are the truly enunciable projects. However, to return to the distinction between configuration ideas and construction ideas, I would now like to address ideas that are partial, or in other words, that only focus on one of these two aspects. This is the starting point for the development of the following sub-chapter about "literalness" in the project.

2 → 3. literalness

In this sub-chapter, I shall discuss the possibility of the work of architecture being literal. As I stated earlier with regard to art, the literalness of the work results from the rigorous realisation of the idea, namely by not deviating towards formal particularities other than those strictly necessary for that rigour. Literalness is the means through which the work, in its formal/material dimension, becomes transparent in relation to the idea[257].

In the previous sub-chapter I referred to the technical constraints that limit enunciability within the specific scope of the architecture project. I mentioned, namely, the implausibility of an idea encompassing all the aspects of a project (1) in view of the variety of those aspects and (2) in view of the constraints imposed by their complex interrelation. In view of the difficult operative framework of the project, I also considered the hypothesis of an idea being incomplete. I provided the example of Fujii's *Todoroki House*, where the idea is merely configurative and does not contain constructive data. I shall return to this example in order to introduce the theme of this sub-chapter.

When an idea defines a configuration for the space, one could say that all that is left is its realisation in a literal manner. It is the question that is raised, for example, with regard to LeWitt's *Incomplete Open Cubes*. The various cube possibilities, enunciated in a table by LeWitt, admit the possibility of several different realisations. The cubes may be of different sizes (a problem which, in architecture, is posed mainly as a question of scale), the dimension of the pieces that represent the edges can vary and the same applies to their material. LeWitt chose 42-inch (edge) cubes with white surfaces (painted aluminium). The appearance of the cubes, realised in this manner, reiterates their abstract nature. *Todoroki House* is composed of cubes with the height of a storey and is built of bare concrete. As I have asked before: would this be the most literal realisation of the idea? Would it be more literal for it to be stuccoed and painted white?

If the idea does not imply a determined type of constructive resolution, the inevitable need to deal with that resolution (and consequently with the work's material expression) may lead to the idea construing an autonomous discourse. If the idea does not connote or denote what its literal realisation should be, the realisation may be seen as a separate problem of constructive expression (and, in that sense, formal), or in other words, as a problem of *language*. A problem is raised: if the language is not transparent in relation to the idea (to use Bochner's words), then in relation to what can it be transparent?

It is based on this question that I will develop this sub-chapter. I will address literalness itself[258],

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[257] If in art an enunciation can easily be specified several times, in architecture the most common is the realisation of a project happening only once. Despite this, the question of literalness applies in the same manner. According to Kotz, "The fact that there may be only one instantiation, as in architecture, does not mean that this relation to a plan or template is not present". Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At*, p. 299, note 26.

[258] I propose an acceptation of "literalness" that is different from what Mark Linder adopts to analyse architecture projects. Linder uses the

arguing that two possibilities exist: (1) either the language of the work is transparent regarding the language used in its conception, or (2) the language of the work is literal regarding the constructive reason for its execution. Finally, I will conclude with the relationship between literalness and the dualities "complete ideas / incomplete ideas" and "configurative ideas / constructive ideas".

I propose to start off with a text by Rayner Banham from 1958 – "Machine Aesthetes". In this text, Banham establishes a difference between what is considered the "machine aesthetics" in the context of rationalist architecture and what, from his own point of view, should be true machine aesthetics. It is clear from the way that I have just laid out Banham's argument that this is a critical argument in relation to the aesthetics of the rationalist machine. Otherwise, it would not be necessary to evoke a "*true* machine aesthetic". Banham writes:

> The White Architecture was largely produced by a piece of special pleading of basic functional-rationalist doctrine in terms of (a) the idea of living in a Machine Age and (b) the idea of reinforced concrete as a material symbolic of that age. Somewhere along the line a couple of crucial aesthetic prejudices were read into the equation with results that would have gone something like this, had it been possible, psychologically, to set them down in cold print:
>
> This is a Machine Age.
>
> Machine surfaces are smooth and plain.
>
> Machine forms are of rule-and-compass simplicity.
>
> Reinforced concrete is the Machine Age material.
>
> Therefore
>
> Reinforced concrete has a smooth surface and must be used in rule-and-compass shapes".[259]

Banham uses this exercise in logic to underline that, in his opinion, there is an incoherence in white architecture between, on one hand, the system of definition of the form (the geometric purity of the design) and, on the other, the construction system (the plasticity of concrete, as well as its roughness)[260]. Banham is interested in proposing models of configuration of the architectural form that are better suited to the use of reinforced concrete than the rationalist models. Therefore, he rejects "rule-and-compass" designs that have a rigidity that he finds foreign to the formal malleability permitted by the concrete formwork and the "raw" appearance of the material. Nevertheless, I am not quoting Banham in order to reiterate this criticism (also because accusing the rationalist code of not being based on constructive truth is, in itself, merely stating a fact). Instead, both arguments are relevant for this discussion, regardless of being put in opposition or not. Despite being based on constructive assumptions, the rationalist design – paradigmatically enunciated in

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term in the sense given to it within the context of minimalism. For an analysis of architecture projects from that particular point of view and also for an interesting analysis of the meaning of the term "literal", see: Mark Linder, "Drawing, Literally", pp. 35-51.

[259] Reyner Banham, "Machine Aesthetes", in *A Critic Writes: Essays by Reyner Banham*, ed. Mary Banham, Paul Barker, Sutherland Lyall & Cedric Price, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1996, p. 27.

[260] This criticism is repeated by Banham in: Reyner Banham, The *Architecture of the Well-tempered Environment*, 2nd ed., Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984 [originally published in 1969].

1926 by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeuneret in "Les 5 Points d'une Architecture Nouvelle" (The 5 Points of a New Architecture)[261] – reveals above all a system of *configuration of form*. It is part of the rationalist code that the works should be more of a reflection of the designing system that led to their form instead of the expression of a constructive truth. Now, why am I referring to all this when the theme under discussion is the literalness of the work? Because this analysis by Banham is developed around what I consider to be the two paradigms of *literalness*:

- the work is literal in relation to the *operative universe* in which it was conceived;
- the work is literal in relation to the *constructive reason* inherent to its realisation.

I will discuss them separately and attempt to define their scope in a little more detail[262].

It is a known fact that rationalist buildings were originally viewed with distrust because they resembled scale models. White, plain and without details, they look like scale models enlarged to a 1:1 scale. In all truth, when I say "free of details", I should be saying "with the sophistication of detail required for a synthetic *image*". In this white architecture, the construction is manipulated in such a way as to achieve an *effect* of simplicity – obtaining an image that, because it gives expression only to the contour of the forms, is close to a drawing. In this sense, white characterises not only the "plastic" essence of the construction, but also the operative environment in which the architectural form, in its condition as a mental object, is construed. The architecture is white similarly to the white part of a sheet of paper on which the lines of a drawing acquire particular contrast, or similarly to a Bristol-card scale model (or plaster of Paris)[263]. In white architecture, the forms do not follow the most immediate logic of their materiality, in other words, of their future construction. Instead, forms express the operative universe in which they were conceived through a laborious manipulation of that materiality. That which is *concrete* (the form and the matter) expresses what is *abstract* (a determined environment of cogitation on the project).

It is significant that Banham should refer specifically to *sachlich* white architecture. As opposed to what Banham suggests, the formal and constructive model of "white architecture" is not limited to creating "rule-and-compass" forms. In addition to the austerity that the architects of *neue Sachlichkeit* bestowed on it, white architecture can also be seen as that which most eloquently presents itself as "a masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light"[264]. In this way, it becomes the object of a formal elaborateness, such as when it comes from Hans Scharoun or Álvaro Siza. Both these authors demonstrate how the buildings can get close to becoming "pure drawing", without design gaining the austerity of basic *sachlich* geometry. However, in those cases, the design does more than be transparent in relation to the

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[261] Le Corbusier & Pierre Jeuneret, *Oeuvre Complete: Volume I, 1910-29*, ed. W. Boesiger & O. Storonov, 15th edition, Basel/Boston/Berlin: Birkhauser, 1999, pp. 128-129.
[262] In chapter II-2, I shall refer to the self-reflexive reach – more productive or more epistemological – of both types of literalness.
[263] I had the opportunity to write about this matter in: José Capela "Ética – Dialéctica", in André Tavares & Pedro Bandeira (eds.), *Só Nós e Santa Tecla: A Casa de Caminha de Sergio Fernandez*, Porto: Dafne, 2008, pp. 148-173.
[264] Le Corbusier, *Vers une Architecture*, Paris: Flammarion, 1995, p. 16 [originally published in 1923].

system of conception to which it belongs. It is no longer the *medium* and becomes the *purpose*. It becomes a factor of valuation of the work in its own right. It is no longer *literal*.

The possibility that the work is literal in relation to the operative universe in which it was conceived is not limited to the white architecture of *neue Sachlichkeit*. The history of literalness does not begin nor end there.

As I have already mentioned, the autonomy of the project established during the Renaissance implies not only the autonomy of the project as a product of the artistic work of the architect but also the creation of "contexts of conception" specific to architectural practices – contexts that are simultaneously mental and visual. Indeed, from the perspective of visual culture, the autonomy of the project may have repercussions on the image of the buildings, but more than that, its repercussion was the beginning of a history of "project images" as the presentation of the result or as the work material that precedes the project. Freehand sketches or progressively more rigorous drawings, technical drawings and construction details, schemes, diagrams, scale models and perspective images, 3D, representations ranging from large-scale to 1:1 scale – this is how architects usually express themselves, and this is how they usually consider the information they work with.

When the time comes to define the form of the work, this autonomy of the "project as an image" may evolve in the sense of it becoming superimposed, as I began by saying, on constructive logic. An inversion takes place: instead of the representation looking like what may come to be real, reality is conceived in order to look like the representation. The "form of the result" quotes (and eventually reflects on) the "instrumental forms" that are at its origin. The work instruments are no longer ancillary and become the theme[265].

The difference between "representing what is concrete" and "representing what is abstract" is fairly useful in considering the different possibilities, which I shall present below, of a work being literal in relation to the *operative universe* in which it was conceived.

In order to start examining this theme, I propose to return to Eisenman. One of the basic assumptions of his *Houses of Cards* is the omission of constructive vicissitudes, in favour of the permanence of form in stages that belong to the context of the architect's work. The designation "houses of cards" already points in this direction. But even more explicit is the designation "Cardboard Architecture", the title Eisenman gives his important texts from 1972 regarding *House I* and *House II*[266]. However, in contrast to what this designation might make believe, for Eisenman it is not just a matter of making architecture with the appearance of the "cardboard architecture" of scale models, which is what occurs

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[265] In a certain way, this possibility can be seen as a development of a road opened by classical or classicist architecture. The reason for classic forms mounts back to the tectonic logic of wood construction. When those same forms are used to build using stone, they become the matter of pure design. A form that now only exists as a design (because it is already disconnected from wood construction) is superimposed on constructive reason. What happens is that, in this case, and according to the nature of classical architecture, the design reproduces other constructions – concrete entities – and not exactly an operative universe of conception of forms in its most abstract sense.

[266] Eisenman, "Cardboard Architecture".

through the similarity between rationalist buildings and the scale models that represent them. He is interested not only on *that* interface between project and reality, but also the *multiplicity* of interfaces between drawing, scale model and built work used by architects. He explores several types of illusionism between what is bi-dimensional and three-dimensional, between what is real and what is representation. He disturbs the verisimilitude of images ("image" in the broadest sense, not just as a bi-dimensional entity) by making them ambiguous and, in this way, tests the manner how the representations of forms used within the scope of the project can be reflected by the forms themselves. In order to illustrate the variety and the reach of these experiences, I believe that it is worthwhile quoting extensively from another text by Eisenman regarding the *Houses of Cards*:

> House I was built like a model, its connections between beam and columns could only have been fabricated as one builds a model airplane; they were sanded and glued by hand. But further, what appeared to be the columns and beams which were exposed in the space did not function as structure, but rather as signs of structure. And if the idea of this reduction was lost on anyone, there was even the outline of a missing column on the floor of the house.
>
> In House I the code was, if anything, metaphoric. On the other hand, House II was deliberately coded to remove it from reality. It was built to look like a model. In fact, in many published photos of the actual building the caption reads "model photo of House II". House II looks like a model because all of the traditional means of identifying built reality – coping lines, flashing lines, frames, sills, and mouldings – were purposely absent. The building was fabricated out of steel and wood and then wrapped in a silicon material which obliterated all of those identifying traces. The difference between House I and House II already suggested some movement away from the traditional idea of the nature of the reality of the built object. Whereas House I was built like a "life-size" model, House II was a representation of such a model. In both cases, what was the reality and what was the sign of that reality were thrown into question.
>
> House VI also looks like a model. It is also a model in that it "represents" a series of transformational diagrams, the process of the house which is its reality. Instead of the house being the result of a process of transformation as in House II and IV, the house now is the process of transformation.
>
> In House X, for the first time in this work, the actual building was no longer a metaphorical model. But conversely, the building was no longer the final reality, the model was. But the model was also now moving toward the intersection of two modes of representation, drawing and model. It was an axonometric model. Usually a scale model is a three-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional reality. An axonometric drawing is a two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional reality. An axonometric model differs from an axonometric drawing in that while it is a representation, it is not representing an actual object. It is both process and reality. As such it begins to represent drawing rather than building. It is both a statement of the potential object-autonomy of a model and at the same time a representation of the approximate nature of the sign in the process of the realization of the house. Thus, it is both object and representation.[267]

Also with regard to the architect's work instruments, Eisenman's perspective tends to be of a linguistic order. Eisenman focuses on the nature of signs and the interrelation between them. For that reason, the work instruments that he implies in his research are specifically those that serve to *represent* the form of the buildings. If the forms of Eisenman's projects are purely geometric – and, in that sense, can be considered

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[267] Peter Eisenman, "The Representation of Doubt: At the Sign of the Sign", in *Eisenman Inside Out*, p. 146-147 [originally published in *Rassegna* 9 (March 1982), pp. 69-74].

abstract – the representations of those forms are *figurative*. Eisenman does not represent abstract aspects of the project. That might be done, for example, by representing the interrelation between the different functions of a building through a diagram. Eisenman represents the form. He *figures* the form. Even the drawings from the start of the creative process for each of the *Houses of Cards*, where the building is in an embryonic stage and is no more than the basic volume that will be subject to manipulation, are already representative of the form of the building.

This – specifically figurative – possibility of representation does not encompass everything that the operative universe of the architecture project could be – a universe regarding which the work can be literal. These experiments by Eisenman must be contrasted with others relating to the abstract instruments of the project. I shall address these next.

More abstract than the models or the axonometric representations that Eisenman mentions are the plans and sections. On the one hand, they are mimetic representations of forms that have been built or are to be built. On the other hand, they reveal a certain degree of abstraction.

It is not physically possible to see the plans or the sections of any given built form. As I mentioned above, Bochner discovered this fact during his foray into photography. Plans and sections can only be associated to reality by means of a code. That which is three-dimensional is synthesised in two-dimensional graphic representations that can only be connected to reality by those who fully understand this code. Only those who can read them can combine them all and thus achieve an overall understanding of the forms and spaces. It is due to this degree of abstraction that plans and sections allow privileged access to the real measurements of artifacts, in their actual scale.

The form of a project may be the literal translation of a plan or section. This is what happens, for example, with the *Villa à Carthage* by Le Corbusier, in its initial 1928 version[268]. Le Corbusier creates a front for the building closed off only by means of glass surfaces. Through this formal strategy, when the slabs and walls that organise the house's interior spaces meet that outer facade, they configure an elevation that simply exteriorises the actual cross-section, with a configuration that can be characterised by that very section. The elevation is literal in relation to the configuration of the interior spaces. This is the same strategy that MVRDV apply in the *Double House* [28 . 29 . 30] or in *Berlin Voids* [25 . 26].

I would now like to delve further towards the abstract and refer to the functionalist axiom according to which "form follows function"[269]. When the argument that the form should follow the function is taken to the extreme, what is in fact being proposed is that the form be *literal* in relation to the function. In addition to

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[268] See: Le Corbusier & Pierre Jeuneret, *Oeuvre Complète*, pp. 176-177.

[269] Louis Sullivan was the first to say so, in 1896, writing: "It is the pervading law of all things organic and inorganic, / Of all things physical and metaphysical, / Of all things human and all things super-human, / Of all true manifestations of the head, / Of the heart, of the soul, / That the life is recognizable in its expression, / That form ever follows function. This is the law". Louis Sullivan, "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered", Louis Sullivan, "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered", in Harry Francis Mallgrave & Christina Contandriopoulos (eds.), *Architectural Theory, Volume II: An Anthology from 1871-2005*, Malden/Oxford/Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2008, p. 127 [originally published in; *Lippincott's Magazine* (March 1896)].

everything that functionalist thought implies with regard to sizing and articulating spaces, the form being *conceptually literal* in relation to the function may lead to the form becoming *illustrative* in relation to the function. The axiom "form follows function" becomes crucial, not only as a starting point for the project, but also as a driving force of the work's expression – towards its formal rhetoric. An entity as abstract as the programme acquires expression. That is what happens when one applies the operating model designated as a "pavilion system" – a model which, according to Emil Kaufmann, dates back to Ledoux[270] and that is meticulously enunciated by Moisej Ginzburg[271]. The different functions provided in the programme are judicially grouped into differentiated sectors and, when the time to define the form arrives, each of those sectors leads to an autonomous volume. The different parts of the programme have correspondence in the different volumes that make up the building, or in other words, the form is literal in relation to the diagram that serves to organise the functions provided in the programme. In a certain way, the building is a three-dimensional representation of the program's distribution diagram.

Kazuyo Sejima takes this possibility even further in her individual work and in her work performed with Ryue Nishizawa at the firm SANAA. She increases the complexity of the relationship between concept and form. Her approach to the project does not focus, or at least doesn't start off by focusing, on the form. In an interview in 2000, Sejima states that:

> (...) the way we understand the program is very abstract, so it can't become a form. It can not be turned into something that is an identifiable form, because it is just too abstract to become so well defined. So the most important thing is how the relationships occur.[272]

According to this statement, Sejima commences her work based on a programme (an entity of an abstract nature), and it is based on that program that she speculates about the possibilities available for project resolution without, however, beginning the definition of forms. In this sense, Sejima operates within a *diagrammatic* perspective of the program, as also the example of the pavilion system is diagrammatic. It takes into account *partial* and *abstract* aspects taken from reality. A diagram does not *figure*; it does not represent reality mimetically. It merely represents partial and abstract aspects taken from reality in a precise manner. However, Sejima is very distant from functionalist methodology, where the positivist use of the diagram seeks a functional optimization of spaces or buildings. For Sejima, abstract consideration of the program constitutes a *speculative* opportunity. Sejima invents the project based on the invention of an approach to the program.

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[270] See: Emil Kaufmann, *De Ledoux à Le Corbusier: Origine et Développement de l'Architecture Autonome*, trans. Guy Ballangé, Paris: La Villette, 2002 [originally published as *Von Ledoux bis Le Corbusier: Ursprung und Entwicklung der Automen Architektur*, Wien: Passer, 1933].

[271] See: Moisej Ginzburg, "New Methods of Architectural Thought" em http://rosswolfe.wordpress.com/2011/07/07/moisei-ginzburg-"new-methods-of-architectural-thought"□□□□□-□□□□□□□-«□□□□/ [originally published as: "Novye Metody Arkhitekturnogo Myshlenia", *Sovremenennia Arkitectura*, 1, 1926, pp. 1-4].

[272] Alejandro Zaera, "A Conversation with Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa", *El Croquis* 77(I)+99, 2001, p. 20.

But literalness in Sejima's work cannot be understood only as an issue of "deduction of form based on the program" or of the "volumetric expression of the program". The projects are literal with regard to the actual operative universe in which they are conceived. That is what Toyo Ito explains in 1996 when he writes the famous text "Diagram Architecture", in which he analyses the work of his former co-worker Sejima. Ito writes:

> [Sejima] arranges the functional conditions which the building is expected to hold, in a final diagram of the space, then she immediately converts that scheme into reality. Which is why the habitual process known as planning is largely non-existent in her work. In her case, the architectural convention that we ourselves call planning rests solely on the diagram of the space. Even the details of the structure are little more than an arrangement utilized as part of the diagram itself. The same occurs when it comes to material and colour selection. Material and colour arrangements remain, from the outset, mere symbols used in the superficial and lineal composition of the diagram. The elemental expressions of material and colour, expressed in the original design drawings or models, are not in any way changed when brought into being as the walls and support of the finished structure. Therefore, the sense of physical relationship to space which one gains from her structures' designs is not the same form of physical relationship hitherto experienced with what could be called "former architecture", but something which purely and simply lies in the abstract spatial forms and models. When we find ourselves in a space which she has produced, we are given to feel a totally new relationship between space and the body. We are compelled to feel exactly the same type of spatial experience we would find if we were to walk around the cities and structures in a computer game. A space of this type has neither texture nor scent; it is physical but, at the same time, an abstract plan. We can not help but feel that our bodies are those of androids in a space where neither body heat, perspiration nor smell exist.[273]

Even if there are doubts as to the unrealistically aseptic nature of the spaces Ito describes, in this analysis of Sejima's work what is important is the fact that the form of the projects translates directly which instruments were used to design the project. "Diagrammatic Architecture" here does not simply mean "architecture made with diagrams" but also "architecture with the image of a diagram". The relationship between the abstract representation of the program and the form of the building identified by Ito is a relationship based on literalness. According to Ito's description, in order to obtain the form of her projects, Sejima does not add any formal information to the data that defines what the project is. The realisation is rigorous in its relation to that definition, in other words, it is literal.

In Sejima's case, as well as in Eisenman's, literalness involves limiting the appearance of architectural objects to the appearance of the representations necessary in order to design them. The image that the project acquires in its conception is adopted as an image of the result. It is not necessary to create a new one. In a sense, one could say that it is a readymade image. Instead of inventing a form, the author takes an existing form, transposes it to a new context and awards it a new function. This is how the dislocation operates: when something is dislocated, the author dispenses with decisions regarding the object's *destination* context and assumes that the decisions taken within the object's context of *origin* are sufficient. For example, since the form of *Fountain* was determined in the context of the manufacture of

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[273] Toyo Ito, "Diagram Architecture", *El Croquis* 77(I)+99, 2001, p. 330.

urinals, Duchamp does not make decisions as to the form within the scope of artistic practice. In the case of the architects mentioned, Eisenman does not have to decide about the expression of his houses, because he adopts the expression of the models; Sejima does not have to decide about the expression of her houses, because she adopts the expression of the diagrams. In as far as regards constructive details, they simply reproduce an image that already exists.

The adoption of a readymade object may imply that such an object brings formal excrescences with it, resulting from their past *existence* or *purpose* and not from a matter of "style". That is what happens with the definition of chair that Kosuth gets from the dictionary, and that is what we see in the greenhouses appropriated by Lacaton & Vassal. However, in as far as concerns Eisenman's scale models or Sejima's diagrams, the "encounter" with the existing entity is a meeting where the author does not really submit to what that entity was before. He made it himself. Here, literalness is guaranteed in two ways:

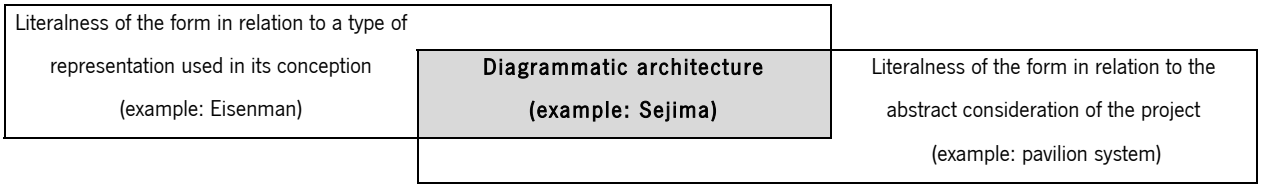
(1) through the rigour with which details that belong to the scale model's image or the diagram are reproduced in the form of the project;

(2) through the typicality of the scale model or the diagram that is used as reference.

When referring to conceptual art I mentioned that, when artifacts are used, *objéts-type* are preferred over other objects. The banality of those artifacts prevents them from disturbing the literalness of the work. Such a disturbance would occur if, instead of just noting that that object was there, the public began to note the design of that object. In the same way, from a purely conceptual perspective, the scale models or the diagrams that are used as reference for the images of Eisenman's or Sejima's projects should be typical. Before they become "that Eisenman scale model" or "that Sejima diagram", they should simply be "an example of a scale model" or "an example of a diagram". It is to the extent that they are capable of representing the category they belong to rather than a specific case – in other words, to the extent that they acquire representativeness – that they can integrate the discoursive sense of the work and be put at the service of a self-reflexive purpose.

The "economy of decisions" is present in these two aspects of literalness, but in different ways. The first may lead to potential excesses in form – the marks of past *existence* or past *purpose* revealed by the displaced entity. The second relates to the formal economy restraint that guarantees that the form is typical.

There are therefore two types of literalness conjugated in Sejima's projects. On the one hand, the form is literal with regard to the layout of spaces. The form translates an *organisational* diagram, as is the case in the pavilion system (although with speculative and not functionalist purposes). On the other hand, the form is literal in relation to the expression of the diagrams themselves. The form reproduces or recreates a type of representation used in the conception of form, as can be seen in Eisenman's *Houses of Cards* (although Sejima expresses a tendingly abstract representation). This can be portrayed according to the following diagram:



The typicality to which I referred is also at the basis of a third possibility: the form is literal in relation to its representation. The possibility of a work of architecture being *iconographically* typical. In this case, the reference for the definition of form does not specifically belong to the operative universe of the architecture project but, rather, consists of commonly used representations. When it is necessary to represent, for example, a building on a traffic sign, it is reduced to a minimal number of graphic elements and synthesised into an icon that can be construed in the most universal way possible. This is what occurs in a three-dimensional manner with the representation of "houses" and "hotels" in the game *Monopoly*. In both these circumstances the images used are not *from* architecture, but *of* architecture. The image of architectural objects is emptied of any meanings that relate to the form in itself – meanings that would constitute noise during the strict and immediate evocation of the building – and is instead dominated by the literalness of the representation. It is this strategy that I propose as yet another means of literalness, when applied to the definition of the architectural forms.

By resorting to the most banal architectural images that exist, this strategy of literalness reduces the form of a project to a certain authorial "anonymity". The author does not have to design anything new; he just uses a banal design. However, it is important not to confuse this anonymity with another, characteristic of certain typological currents. That would be a mistake. Typological integration can be obtained through a camouflage effect, where the work merely repeats the formal structures of what exists in the context into which it will be integrated. The form becomes anonymous because it blends in with the works that were already there. But this strategy has a contextualist dimension that imbues the work with cultural meanings that do not conform to literalness. A work with an image that is recognisable as a specific city or region is the opposite of being literal, because what acquires significance in that recognition is precisely the *form* (even if filtered by the abstraction process that permits the synthesis of the form's "formal structure" only). At most, these iconographically universal representations might have the validity of an archetype. But in a conceptual universe, the validity of icons is more related with ease and immediacy of information than with the definition of any given anthropological essence (at least intentionally, seeing that no representation can be neutral). See, for example, how Yona Friedman summarily represents buildings in her manifests, resorting to the universal "houses" formed by a triangle (a simple gabled roof) over a square (the volume shaped by the walls) [77]. Nothing could be easier or more effective as communication – this is what I mean when I refer to the adoption of icons as literal forms for projects.

This literalness that I am attempting to convey is related to a common designation in architectural vocabulary – the "icon-house". One of the most famous icon-houses in the history of architecture is from

1972 and was made by Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates, as an antechamber before the entrance to the Benjamin Franklin Museum [78]. The "house" is a three-dimensional drawing that recreates the form and location of Franklin's house – a project made by architects, with a typically architectural form, but which performs the function of a sculpture. Nonetheless, I can mention two examples of icon-houses that are in fact houses. One is the *House for Two Brothers,* from 1988, by John Hejduk [80]. The iconographic reference of this work seems to be houses as children draw them, seeing that the chimneys are ironically positioned perpendicularly to the slopes of the roof, and not vertically. Another is the *House in Leymen* by Herzog & deMeuron [79]. It is from 1996-97. This building, also ironically, carries its own base which includes a small lake and the path that crosses it – a base which, ostensively disconnected from the land, ends up as the covering for an external space, in the style of houses built on *pilotis*.

In these projects, the definition of a "new" form is waived in favour of the adoption of an icon. But the literalness of the icon-projects only becomes complete when it is *instrumentalised* to serve another intention, as happens when the icons are used to illustrate a fact or an idea. In that case, not only is the language issue summarily solved, but the meaning comes from *other aspects* of the project. One example of this is MVRDV's residential project *Hageneiland*, in Ypenburg[274] [81]. Part of a project for a total 850 dwellings, *Hageneiland* is a set of single family houses surrounded by four roads – a small neighbourhood. As Michele Costanzo puts it, the project is constituted of

> free association of a basic "archetypical" element: a simple structure with peaked roof, as idealized in children's imaginary. (...) The units are (...) distinguished by the finishing materials (wood, corrugated sheet, stone, polyurethane panels, or tiles) with which they are completely faced, and by their colours (ivy, ochre, blue, grey, black). (...) the garden includes a small tool-shed/greenhouse which mimics the form of the house and can also be made with different materials: wood, bricks, or glass (if used as a greenhouse).[275]

As would happen in a game or a diagram, these objects that summarily represent "houses" operate as *notations*. They are not relevant in themselves, but rather due to the situations that they serve to recreate or the discourse they aid to build. In a news report about the number of dwellings built in each region of a country, an icon-house placed on a map might represent a total of one hundred houses. In the specific case of this MVRDV project, they are notations of a project whose theme is the distribution of residential units in a portion of territory and the resulting arrangement of exterior spaces. It is around this theme that the architects explain their project, placing themselves in a critical position in relation to the regulations and the stereotypes that determine the solutions for residential programs of this type by limiting them.

If used in this manner, the icon-houses are both recognisable *figurative* representations and notations, that is, elements that make sense when cognition elevates them to an *abstract* context. This sort

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[274] See: http://www.mvrdv.nl/#/projects/hagenisland

[275] Michele Costanzo, *MVRDV: Works and Projects 1991-2006*, Milan: Skira, 2006, p. 94.

of figuration is different to that of Eisenman's houses. Indeed, it is the exact opposite. Eisenman's houses figure the abstract forms of the scale models that originated them in order to address formal issues. The icon-houses are minimal configurations of the idea of house, used to address abstract issues. Sejima's "diagram architecture" is somewhere in between. The forms of its works figure the abstract environment in which they are conceived, precisely showing the relationship that is established between the form (the form which can be built) and abstraction (the field of diagrammatic conception).

Eisenman deals with abstract form; Sejima deals with the relationship between form and the abstract; the icon-houses are summary figurations at the service of an abstract discourse. Taking into consideration literalness in relation to the project's operative universe, Eisenman deals with the resources used to address form in itself; Sejima deals with diagrammatic resources; the icon-houses are a supra-disciplinary diagrammatic resource.

I shall now return to the distinction established by Banham, and focus on what I consider to be the second paradigm of literalness – that based on constructive reason. And I am not returning to Banham just to reiterate the distinction between the two paradigms of literalness. Although the literalness of form in relation to the operative universes where it is conceived (namely, rationalist literalness) are the target of its criticism, Banham may well be the author who furthest took the possibility of the form being literal in relation to the logic behind its construction. It is that very literalness that he advocates, and part of his theoretical production evolves based on it. In saying this, I specifically want to mention two models of architecture that Banham considers: (1) the neo-brutalist architecture, in which the materials are used in a direct manner, without any cosmetic concerns, and (2) an architecture reduced to infrastructures. Both these models imply a departure from formal orthodoxies in favour of the definition of forms based on their constructive reason. Construction is no longer a means of realisation of the form and turns into the foundation of its definition. The arrangement of materials is strictly determined by the function those materials must perform.

As I was saying, Banham starts off by defining principles of this type around the definition of the "neo-brutalism" category. In the important text "The New Brutalism", of 1955, Banham uses some of the works of the couple Alison and Peter Smithson as a reference to define the category[276]. Referring to a project from 1953 of a house in Soho that was never built, and to Hunstanton School, a project started in 1949 and built in 1954 [44 . 45], Banham writes:

> Both exhibit their basic structure, and both make a point of exhibiting their materials (...) What has caused Hunstanton to lodge in the public's gullet is the fact that it is almost unique among modern buildings in being made of what it appears to be made of. (...) Hunstanton appears to be made of glass, brick, steel and concrete, and is in fact made of glass, brick, steel and concrete.

[276] Regarding the appearance of the term "New Brutalism" and the history of these two projects see: Anthony Vidler, "Another Brick in the Wall", *October* 136 (Spring 2011), pp. 103-132.

> Water and electricity do not come out of unexplained holes in the wall, but are delivered to the point of use by visible pipes and manifest conduits.[277]

Not only are the materials required for the construction of these buildings kept without any external finishes that alter their appearance, but the infrastructures are summarily superimposed over the construction whereby they too remain visible. The constructive procedures acquire a spontaneity that is normally only permissible in buildings without status, giving birth to the so-called "warehouse aesthetic"[278].

The different construction components are, therefore, arranged in a manner that directly follows necessity. They are placed strictly in order to fulfil a function. Neo-brutalism is radically informal. It is impervious both to the sophistication of surfaces or the modesty that requires that infrastructures be hidden. Banham states "its brutality, its *je-m'en-foutisme*[279], its bloody-mindedness"[280], but these meanings go beyond literalness. It relates to *Informel* or pop[281] rhetoric. I would like to propose a perspective on the "as found" materials focusing only on their immediacy, beyond both the rhetoric of the "badly done" *art informel* or *brut*, and the pop irreverence – historiographical references that contextualise Banham's standpoint in 1955. In as far as concerns literalness, what matters the most is that the manner materials are used is determined by the strict function they are supposed to perform – in other words, how they are *arranged*.

In fact, this way of thinking about building may have quite different value frameworks at its origin, from the *nonchalance* Banham tells us about, to the puritanism of the idea of "truth" (the truth of materials) and also the strictest pragmatism. Let's see how Hans Van der Laan describes the process of artificialisation of materials until their inclusion in architecture works ("works" in the sense of contractor construction works):

> The closed form, rounded, of the material we began by removing from the earth – a block of stone, a piece of wood, clump of clay – cannot under any circumstances immediately bring about that closed form of the interior space. For that purpose, it would be obligatorily necessary to bring together even if only a few pieces of one or the other material. (...) The materials that the house needs, we remove them from their "natural" combination/configuration and recombine them in another manner, into an "artificial" whole. Before man can inhabit his house, two successive operations are therefore necessary: the materials have to be taken from their natural situation in order to them, afterwards, are technically rearranged into a new layout that will produce the artificial form of the house.[282]

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[277] Reyner Banham, "The New Brutalism", in *A Critic Writes*, p. 10 [originally published in *The Architectural Review* 118 (December 1955, pp. 354-361].
[278] *Ibidem*, p. 9.
[279] "Je-m'en-foutisme" is a Gallicism that derives from the expression "Je m'en fout" meaning "I don't care".
[280] Banham, "The New Brutalism", p. 11
[281] See: Alex Potts, "New Brutalism and Pop", in Mark Crinson & Claire Zimmerman (eds.), *Neo-avant-garde and Postmodern: Postwar Architecture in Britain and Beyond*, New Haven: The Yale Center for British Art / London: The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2010, pp. 29-52.
[282] Dom Hans Van Der Laan, *L'Espace Architectonique: Quinze Leçons sur la Disposition de la Demeure Humaine*, trans. Dom Xavier Botte, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989, p. 2-3 [La forme fermée, arrondie, du matériau que nous prélevons de la terre: bloc de pierre, morceau de bois, motte d'argile, ne peut d'aucune façon donner naissance immédiatement à cette autre forme fermée qu'est celle d'un espace intérieur. A cet effet, il faudra nécessairement assembler ne fût-ce que quelques pièces de l'un ou autre de ces matériaux. (...) Les

It is following this telluric vision of construction that Van der Laan argues for an architecture in which the materials are presented in their most primordial truth [48 . 49]. From an ontological perspective, Van der Laan, a Benedictine monk, could not be more distant from Banham, but the buildings he projects and builds are close to neo-brutalist literalness. The difference resides only in the fact that neo-brutalist literalness derives from what Banham calls "(...) an abstemious under-designing of the details (...)"[283], while Van der Laan's literalness results from a purification of the construction that restores its essentiality, and a certain craftsmanship. Hunstanton's visible infrastructures are *cool*; the visible infrastructures of Van der Laan's religious buildings avoid stripping the components of walls and ceilings, protecting their integrity. In neo-brutalism, *reason* (the reason inherent to a strictly functional use of materials) is used as an argument against traditionalist precepts; Van der Laan uses it to define ascetic precepts.

Literalness can, however, be associated to taking an equally ideological stand, focused on pragmatism. The projects of countless architects provide examples of this, among which:

- the prototypes of houses conceived by Alfons Soldevila and Josep Ignasi Llorens since 1971[284] [46 . 47];
- the mobile compartment in the project by architects Kalhöfer-Korschildgen *Fahrt ins Grüne* (Journey to the Country), from 1997[285] [51];
- the rehabilitation, in 2001, of the *Palais de Tokyo* by Lacaton & Vassal[286] [50];

The other paradigm of literalness based on constructive reason, also enunciated by Banham, is that of an architecture reduced to infrastructures. This idea of architecture is developed by Banham over several years and includes some of his most highly rated writings. One of the most important texts during this period was written in 1960 and is the size of a book. It proposes to reconsider the history of modern architecture, precisely adopting infrastructures as the central theme – *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*[287]. In the book's conclusion, Banham quotes Buckminster Fuller regarding the International Style, when he states[288]

> [the "International Style"] used standard plumbing fixtures and only ventured so far as to persuade manufacturers to modify the surface of the valve handles and spigots, and the colour, size, and arrangements of the tiles. The International Bauhaus never

matériaux que nécessite la maison, nous les détachons de leur assemblage «naturel» pour les ré-assembler ailleurs en un tout «artificiel». Avant que l'homme puisse venir habiter sa maison, deux opérations successives s'imposent donc: les matériaux doivent être soustraits à leur situation naturelle, pour ensuite être réunis techniquement en un nouvel ensemble qui produira la forme artificielle de la maison.].

[283] Banham, "The New Brutalism", p. 11.

[284] See: Enric Massip i Bosch, *Habitatges Experimentals 1971-1994: A. Soldevila – J. I. Llorens, Arq.*, 2nd edition, Barcelona: Edicions UPC, 1995.

[285] See: http://www.kalhofer-korschildgen.de/de/projekte/mobile_architektur/fahrt_ins_gruene.html

[286] See: http://www.lacatonvassal.com/index.php?idp=20#

[287] Rayner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, Cambridge (Mass): The MIT Press, 8th Ed., 1994 [originally published: London: Architectural Press, 1960].

[288] About the origin of Fuller's excerpts quoted by Banham, see: Nigel Whiteley, *Reyner Banham: Historian of the Immediate Future*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 2002, p. 155-156.

> went back of the wall-surface to look at the plumbing (...) they never enquired into the overall problem of sanitary fittings themselves (...) In short they only looked at problems of modifications of the surface of end-products, which end-products were inherently sub-functions of a technically obsolete world.[289]

Banham also summarises this perspective in another essential text of his, written in 1965 – "A Home Is Not a House"[290]. I have already mentioned it, seeing that it is there that Banham enunciates the *Environment-Bubble* [72]. This text begins with a question:

> When your house contains such a complex of piping, flues, ducts, wires, lights, inlets, outlets, ovens, sinks, refuse disposers, hi-fi reverberators, antennae, conduits, freezers, heaters – when it contains so many services that the hardware could stand up by itself without any assistance from the house, why have a house to hold it up?[291]

Banham accuses his contemporary fellow architects (especially the Europeans) of remaining chained to an old valorisation of monumentality and not producing projects that accompany technological evolution and seek to create new lifestyles. He forecasts the future of American architecture inspired, once again, by Fuller. He proposes the *Environment-Bubble* model, whereby infrastructures are condensed into a central nucleus he designates a "*standard-of-living package*" – a designation that is itself borrowed from Fuller. The heaviest element that Banham imagines is a sanitary unit which the project might include, but even that would not hinder the mobility of the "house". As I mentioned earlier, François Dallegret, who illustrates the text, ascribes the following image to this enunciation: "a portion of air conditioning around a set of infrastructures and enveloped only by a membrane". This is one of the most charismatic images of architecture in the 1960s. Banham and Dallegret, cloned into a total of five individuals, inhabit a prototype-image of the *Environment-Bubble*[292].

In this way, I conclude my list of the types of literalness I identify in architecture projects. In order to end the sub-chapter, I would like to consider literalness in relation to the variety of ideas I identified in the previous sub-chapter.

There is a clear difference between the literalness related to the generative universe and the literalness related to constructive reason. The first is the closest to the idea. Even if a configurative definition does not dictate a realisation, it does at least dictate a generative universe (the universe in which that configuration is generated) in relation to which the realisation can be literal. In as far as concerns the literalness based on constructive reasoning, one of two things can occur: either (1) the constructive reasoning is not distinguished from a configuration and is part of a complete idea (as in Banham's

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[289] Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, p. 326.
[290] Banham appropriates the title of a song by Dionne Warwick – who is herself mentioned in the text.
[291] Banham, "A Home Is Not a House", originally published in *Art in América* 2 (April 1965), pp. 109-118.
[292] During the 1960s, there are several other proposals in which the form is reduced to little more than infrastructures. Some do not fit into the subject-matter in question here because their fictional nature means that, more than constructive reasoning, it is the *representation* of science fiction universes that predominates. The investigation carried out by the Archigram collective is one example.

Environment-Bubble, or the adoption of greenhouses by Lacaton & Vassal), or otherwise (2) the constructive definition lacks a configuration which completes it. In this last case, the constructive "idea" is not autonomous because it is unable to define what the work is. It isn't exactly an idea, but an *idea of literalness* – a "semi-idea" that may be applied.

It should be noted that, despite the restrictions I have just established, the architecture project has a tradition of literalness that art does not. According to Emil Kaufmann[293], Ledoux wanted architecture to be literal in relation to the program (contrasting the pavilion system with baroque continuity) and to construction (returning materials their own expression). Viollet-le-Duc claimed that structure should determine the form of buildings – which is where literalness lies – and that the logic of the structure should become visible and, in that way, self-explanatory (as opposed to the transnatured logic of the "classical structure"). In the 20th Century, individuals such as Adolf Loos or Hermann Muthesius claimed that the form should be determined by objectivity in architecture and design. They sought to remove the value that was traditionally given to buildings and objects due to their formal eloquence, their "plastic singularity". The term "*Sachlichkeit*" translates nothing other than the literalness of buildings and objects in relation to reasons that are far more prosaic than the *pathos* of their artistry. The banality intrinsic to *objéts-type* is evoked. This is also what conceptual art establishes within the scope of art: the economy and inaffectation inherent to *objéts-type*. The "art" (in the sense of formal eloquence) is taken away from art (as an artistic practice). The purged form of "art" is used in art itself because the real "art" in art is discovered in the "definition of what the work is", in other words, in the idea.

For the work, nothing remains other than to be literal.

[293] See: Kaufmann, *De Ledoux à Le Corbusier*.

3. the work as an entity

As opposed to what occurs in art, in architecture the pertinence of the realisation of the project does not come into question. Projects aim to *serve*, and they only *serve* if they are realised. When viewed as an entity, the project is not incomplete and is valid as a work. It is sufficient as the product of the designer's activity. However, even if a project is not constructed, it has value due to the potential quality of what it provides as a support for daily life.

In 1972, the exhibition Italy: New Domestic Landscape is held at the MoMA. The Italian Collective Archizoom Associati presents a work constituted by a grey, empty room, inside which a voice can be heard describing a colourful house. It may seem tempting to identify a self-sufficient architectural enunciation in this work. However, taking into account what *inhabiting* is (or what I consider here to be *inhabiting*), the voice and what it says characterise the space in the same manner as would a picture of a household landscape framed and hung up on the wall: they both provide an experience which could be included in what inhabiting that space might be, though the inhabited space does not cease to be the same grey room for that reason. I believe that this example is elucidative as to the reasons why it is not necessary to discuss the "self-sufficiency of the enunciation as a work" in the same manner as this comes up in art. An enunciation may be a work of art, but it is not inhabitable (except metaphorically), thus artifacts are the foundation of architecture. *In order to discuss "the work as an entity", I shall therefore analyse the referent of the project and not the project as an entity*.

I shall develop this sub-chapter regarding "work as an entity" by confronting the specificities of the project with the possibilities that I enunciated for conceptual art:

A) reducing the materiality of the work to a purely instrumental condition;

B) adopting materiality as a thematic field for a type of experimentalism which, in opposition to the traditional stability of the work, explores "new materialities";

C) transcending the work's materiality through the way that the public contacts with it;

D) departing from the materiality of the work in favour of artistic modes that consist only of actions without a productive purpose .

I shall conclude that these possibilities, identified for conceptual art, are applicable to the project, except for those defined in paragraph C). Additionally, bearing in mind that (1) architecture works are subject to use and that (2) the construction matter seeks to condition the inhabitable environmental "matter", I shall reorganise the classification by cross-referencing two dichotomies:

- the consideration of the work of architecture, either as a static constructive entity, or as an interactive device;
- the consideration of the matter in as far as concerns either its mechanical qualities (its arrangement), or its substantial qualities (its composition).

A) reducing the materiality of the work to a purely instrumental condition

I have defined "to *instrumentalise* the work" as: placing that work at the service of the most basic function it can perform – communicating – and understanding that function in its strictest acceptation, in other words, restricting communicating to simply informing. In this sense, I raised the possibility of *instrumentalisation* being related to A.1) resorting to the most basic and unaffected means of communication in order to build a "thesis" or consider a "problem" around artistic practice, or to A.2) the exploration of the means in which information is introduced to the public sphere. In either case, the work is understood as a communicational entity. Even if the meaning of the work is rooted in its poetic dimension, from this perspective it is viewed in a strictly functional manner, in other words, as an entity that conveys a set of data between author and receiver.

This is not what happens in architecture. Here, the strictest function of the work is not related to communication, but construction: support, delimitation, protection, enclosure, climate control etc. constitute the minimum function of architectural artifacts. The purpose of the built work, as an entity, is directly associated to materiality. The parallelism only serves to highlight the differences in their purposes: in opposition to what happens in art, matter is not a *means* but an *end*.

In view of this assumption, in as far as concerns *instrumentalisation*, one can conclude that, in a project, reducing the work to its strictest functionality means resorting to construction components in a manner that is also strictly functional. This particular type of construction has already been enunciated in this chapter, using two texts by Banham: "New Brutalism" was a reference to the possibility of an immediate and unaffected construction; "A Home is Not a House" was a reference to the possibility of reducing artifacts to infrastructures. Everything that was said about literalness based on constructive reason fits in here, and can be compared to the contents of paragraph A.1) established for works of conceptual art. In architecture, to view the matter composing the work in a purely instrumental way means *resorting to the most basic and unaffected construction means with a view to a purely functional constitution of an artifact.*

I would just like to identify a specific group from within the general scope of these works, in which constructive reason leads to the adoption of "readymade materials". The strictly functional consideration of constructive materials means that their arrangement and combination are purely pragmatic and, to that extent, unrelated to precepts of a compositional nature. This same functional perspective may lead to any existing material being considered useful, even if it is not listed among conventional construction materials. That is what happens when Cirugeda uses jute bags filled with cork to cover up the *Trincheras* (Trenches) he designs in 2005 in order to provide a group of students in Malaga with workspaces created through self-construction as an alternative to their basement[294] [58].

[294] http://www.recetasurbanas.net/index.php?idioma=ESP&REF=3&ID=0018

At a larger scale, the *Nomadic Museum* is designed, also in 2005, by Shigeru Ban to host an itinerant exhibition of the photographer Gregory Colbert [59]. Planned for assembly in different locations, the pavilion is comprised of two long walls formed by 148 ISO containers – components easily found in any port. The containers are laid out in four layers, in a brick-wall pattern with a minimal overlap, in such a manner that, together, they create a grid of *fills* (containers) and *voids* (intervals between containers). The remaining elements required for the pavilion's assembly (particularly, structural pieces of cardboard to support the roof panels) are transported from on location to another inside 14 of the 148 containers. The other 134 are obtained at each location.

With regard to the exploration of mechanisms for the introduction of the work into the public sphere, I believe that it is not possible to establish the parallelism between art and architecture. In architecture, the political question of the work's introduction into the public sphere relates to the situation of the *project* in view of social practices – which is entirely unrelated to the introduction of the *work as an entity* that I discuss in this sub-chapter. In art, due to the ambiguity that exists between enunciation and work, to publish an enunciation in a newspaper is in itself the equivalent to producing a work of art. In architecture, as I have repeatedly mentioned, project as an enunciation (signifier) and project as an enunciated work (referent) cannot be confused.

B) adopting materiality as a thematic field for a type of experimentalism which, in opposition to the traditional stability of the work, explores "new materialities"

The second type of artworks I identified was the type that results from the adoption of materiality as the theme. It is easier to associate to architecture because what is in question is the work of art as an artifact and projects always focus on artifacts.

Also regarding architecture, I shall not consider experiences that seek the "plasticity" which materials can offer, even if this implies a certain degree of technical innovation. Instead, I shall address the experiences that question the assumptions inherent to the consideration of materiality. Vitruvius defined two assumptions that have revealed particularly stable within the framework of disciplinary values: the capacity of materials to remain stable and to be long-lasting – condensed in the single term *Firmitas*– and their potential for being organised in a manner that ensures the compositional quality of the work – condensed in the single term *Venustas*. The works I shall consider tend to destabilise this framework of values.

Before identifying and analysing projects, I should like to introduce a few general considerations regarding the specificity of architecture in relation to what I defined earlier for conceptual art regarding this same theme. I shall propose a new organisation of items that I consider more suitable to the project in view of those considerations.

B.1) Firstly, I believe that the dilution of the work in its context has nothing of experimental in the field of

architecture. I am no longer just referring to the fact that architectural artifacts are almost always implanted – which in itself relativizes their *objecthood* – but also to the works that lose formal autonomy in favour of a symbiotic relationship with the terrain. One only has to look at the images brought together by Bernard Rudofsky at the exhibition *Architecture Without Architects* which he organised at MoMA in 1964 to see that it is not infrequent for some primordial constructions to have the terrain as their own matter. One of those images has been widely used – that of a village in the Chinese province of Honnan, where the houses are fully underground and only contact the exterior through patios that are themselves excavated below ground level[295]. Works such as these would be more suitable in order to define formal parallels between works of architecture and land art works than they are for this discussion.

B.2) In relation to the experiences with volatilisation of the work, limits are imposed on architecture due to their function, either as support (which implies stability), or climate control (which often implies closing off spaces, at least partially). As Ignasi de Solà-Morales states,

> (...) it is [its] material, physically consistent and constructively solid condition that delimits a space, which, for twenty-five centuries, meant that architecture was a field of knowledge and a technique related to permanence.[296]

Little has changed in the standard practice of project design since the time when, within the context of the Industrial Revolution, skeletal structures and large glass panels were adopted as construction resources. Since that time, the lightness of constructions is obtained mainly through a virtuous balance between stability and the (at least apparent) decrease of construction materials. The use of glass permitted the sublimation of construction matter through both transparency and reflective effects, the history of which is paradigmatically connected to texts by Sigfried Giedion[297] or Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky[298]). However, to the extent that this relates precisely to *effects*, their interest (mainly phenomenological) is completely unrelated to the conceptual scope. They operate at the level of "what matter seems to be" and not of "what matter is".

In view of these limitations, it isn't easy to find architecture projects that explore the limits of the work's material nature. The "immateriality" that I shall attempt to address here will not reach, for example, the

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[295] Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture Without Architects* (exhibition catalogue), 3rd ed., Albuquerque: University of New México Press, 1995, fig. 16 [originally published: New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1965].

[296] Ignasi de Solà-Morales, "Arquitectura Líquida", in *Territorios*, Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2002, p. 126 [(...) es la condición material, físicamente consistente, constructivamente sólida, delimitadora de un espacio, lo que ha hecho, durante veintecinco siglos, que la arquitectura sea un saber y una técnica ligada a la permanencia.].

[297] I refer to the concept of *Durchdringung* (inter-penetration) which Giedion uses, for example, in: Sigfried Giedion, *Construire en France, Construire en Fer, Construire en Beton*, trans. Guy Ballangé, Paris: Éditions de la Villette, 2000, pp. 7-9 and 59-65 [originally published as *Bauen in Frankreich, Bauen in Eisen, Bauen in Eisenbeton*, Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1928]. See also: Hilde Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity: A Critique*, 3rd ed., Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 2001, pp. 30-35; 41-42.

[298] Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal" (Part I & Part II)", in Todd Ganon (ed.), *The Light Construction Reader*, New York: The Monacelli Press, 2002, pp. 91-101 and 103-113 [originally published, respectively: *Perspecta* 13/14 (1971) and *Oppositions* 13 (1978)].

speculative depth of the book *Immaterial Architecture*[299] by Hill. In order to open the materiality of architecture to speculation, Hill decides on a "material list" format and associates each material to one or more examples of works. Some of those examples are architecture projects or research work by architects, but many others – those that bring about the most provoking clashes with project design routines – are art works (some are conceptual art works). At this point, I shall examine only architecture projects.

Conceptual art is the reference point in this dissertation but, also in as far as regards the "work as an entity", what will be examined is its purpose and not its accomplishments. Instead of pointing out conceptual art works as a source of "inspiration" for potential project design experiences, I propose to identify the aspects of the project that include the conceptual purpose of questioning the work's materiality.

In view of these assumptions, instead of what I defined earlier for conceptual art, I propose to establish a classification for the *unstable works of architecture* by dividing them into two major groups:

B.1) works involving **mechanical** instability

These are works that function as, or include, mechanical devices. These works can be manipulated in order to produce changes in the position of elements with a stable — in other words, rigid — constitution. This type is divided into two subtypes. When the elements that constitute the work are manipulated in such a manner that they are *articulated* into a new relative position, I consider that work **articulable**. It is the world of "assembly games". The pieces vary in their relative position according to a predefined system: they fit in, rotate, slide, etc. When the change occurs because the work, or part of the work, can be moved similarly to a vehicle, then it is **mobile**. In this case, there is total mobility.

B.2) works involving **substantial** instability

These are works whose constitution is itself unstable. Their matter is not rigid. These are the works closest to the volatilisation that I examined within the scope of conceptual art. Here too, I propose a division into two subtypes. One of them includes works where a volatile nature is given to elements that perform a parietal function, in other words, elements whose duty it is to limit the space. I shall call them **epidermal**. The other subtype includes works of which the matter is not of a parietal nature, though the inhabitable medium itself is. The inhabitable medium is defined as a mass of a certain matter or subject to a determined energy. These are **atmospheric** works. It should be noted that while works with mechanical instability depend on manipulation by those who use them, the works I designate as "atmospheric" must be activated in order to exist.

Once again, the works I shall examine next are meant to serve as an example. They are merely illustrations of possibilities. Each type of work constitutes an independent research theme. Each comprises a specific field of knowledge that I do not intend to elaborate on.

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[299] Jonathan Hill, *Immaterial Architecture*, London/New York: Routledge, 2006.

B.1) works involving mechanical instability

I shall start off with **articulable** works. These works are conceived so that their constitution, or their arrangement, varies over time, according to the wishes of those who inhabit them. They are works in process – "process" understood not as a set of procedures that allow a form to be reached (process in the acceptation I have already mentioned), but as a set of procedures to which the form is subject after the work has been built[300].

These buildings are conceived in order to be flexible according to an acceptation of flexibility that views the machine as a model. Similarly to a machine, the work is viewed as a sum of independent parts, each with a specific function, and the set is articulated as a mechanism. To that extent, these works are part of the modern tradition.

I propose to list a few examples of this type of work, taking into account the scale of the articulable elements, ranging from those defining interior spaces, to building elements, up to urban scale.

- *articulable space-defining elements*

  Commonplace articulable elements are included within this type, such as the sliding doors that allow a room to be divided in two or communication between indoors and outdoors. The most often quoted example in history of architecture is surely the upper floor of *Schroder House* conceived by Gerrit Rietveld together with his client and lover Truus Schroder-Schrader in 1924 and built in Utrecht in 1925. By means of a set of sliding panels, the same area can be used as a single space or divided into compartments.

  Shigeru Ban takes this possibility further in *Nine-Square Grid House*, built in Hadano, Japan, in 1997 [60]. Diagrammatically, this house is made up of a universal roof placed over two long parallel cupboards, between which the nine modules referred to in the house's name can be found. In addition to these elements, there are also sets of sliding panels that can be used to change the configuration of the space, according to the nine square grid. In this way, the house can vary between: a single space, covered but continuous with the exterior; and a group of spaces cut off from the exterior and separated from each other.

  Despite being more common, the sliding panels are not the only device that allows the configuration of spaces to be altered. I will mention another example. Between 1986 and 1995, Eduard Böhtlingk developed a mobile camper called *Markies* – which means "marquee" in Flemish [61]. As the name may suggest, two awnings similar to those of a camping tent, are added to the parallelepiped volume of this residential unit. Its sidewalls may be withdrawn to the exterior and become the floor for two extra areas. Each of these areas is enveloped by a bellows that is fixed, from one side, to the covering

[300] Carl Andre states that "Whereas plastic art is a repeated record of a process, clastic art provides the particles for an ongoing process." Quoted in Lippard & Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art", p. 219.

of the parallelepiped and, from the other, to the lowered panel that became a pavement. One of the bellows is opaque; the other transparent.

- *articulable building components*

The context of the Russian or Soviet vanguards gave origin to many examples of building projects including articulable sectors. The *Monument to the Third International*, by Vladimir Evgrafovich Tatlin, is from 1919-20 and was destined to lodge the main institutions of a future world state. It is composed of three construction volumes that rotate around an axis displaying the passage of time, similarly to a clock, and corresponding to the periodicity of three types of political initiative – legislative, executive and informative. At the bottom, a cube moves at the speed of one revolution per year. In the middle, an oblique square-based pyramid moves at the speed of one revolution per month. On top, a cylindrical body moves at the speed of one revolution per day. This set is articulated by a complex elevator system which adapts to the movement of the three volumes and is covered by a helicoidal, transparent structure, 400 metres high (1/100 000 of the earths' meridian) which gives it its famous appearance. At a much smaller scale, *Leningradskaya Pravda* is a project designed to receive the facilities of the *Pravda* newspaper. It was designed by Konstantin Stepanovich Melnikov and is from 1924. Here too the volumes that make up the building, placed on different levels, can rotate. However, while in the Tatlin project each volume rotates around a central axis, in *Lenpravda* the cantilever rooms project from a cylindrical volume that articulates them and constitutes their common axis of rotation. They can overlap or move away from each other, but are always connected by the stairs.

Forty years later, Western and Japanese architecture undertakes experiments that are apparently similar to these. Also in this new context, impossible projects are designed as well as others that simply try and apply the technology already used in other areas of production to innovative architecture models.

I shall mention Price, once again – the architect who places the *actual technical control of the project* at the service of the creation of spaces with an unstable arrangement. For Price, instability has advantages at two levels. One is at the level of project design practice. The fact that architecture projects are used to establish *the* definitive form of a construction which is going to be subject to variable demands over time, in Price's opinion, is doubtful. It burdens architects with a responsibility that, from his point of view, ends up inhibiting inventiveness. He states that

> (...) an overwhelming desire to 'get it right the first time' in architecture and planning encourages the safe solution and the dull practitioner.[301]

[301] Price, *The Square Book*, p. 11.

The other advantage, the most crucial, relates to the connection of the individuals with the spaces they inhabit. I mentioned it as well as the projects at the Fun Palace and the Inter-Action Centre as examples [62 . 63 . 64]. Thus does Price define an outlook of freedom both for the architect and for the inhabitant.

From a technical perspective, Price creates conditions for instability through the separation between structure and space-defining elements – a separation that evolves through history from the skeletal structure of buildings resulting from the use of iron and concrete, to the simultaneously structural and infrastructural logic of the so-called megastructures. As I mentioned earlier, the Fun Palace is constituted by a steel skeletal structure equipped with a crane. The structure acts as a support for all the other space-defining elements, as well as all the infrastructural equipment that contributes to the configuration those spaces ("vapour barriers, warm air curtains, fog dispersal plants and horizontal and vertical lightweight blinds"[302]), and also for the elements that allow the establishment of pathways between their different parts. So that it can have a combinational nature, *Fun Palace* is an "assembling game". As Price explains,

> In order to achieve the degree of flexibility in the provision of activity enclosures it is necessary to be able to rapidly construct such enclosures from a limited kit of parts and for the final particular variation or tuning-up to depend on the additive use of environmental control equipment.[303]

Price operates in an area situated between:

- the reduction of architectural objects to their basic components, seen as components that are simultaneously formal and constructive. In this sense, Price comes close to the logic of separation of object components that characterises constructivism[304].
- the strictly functional understanding of building components, whether regarding the closure of spaces or the environmental conditioning of those spaces. In this sense, Price approaches Banham.

It is this reduction of construction down to its basic components – a dissection of a reductionist nature – which permits Price to dismantle the buildings' rigidity and transform them into interactive devices.

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[302] Landau, "A Philosophy of Enabling", p. 11 [(...) an architecture which provided an unenclosed steel frame structure, fully serviced by a travelling gantry crane and containing hanging auditoria, moving walls, floors, ceilings and walkways, multi-level ramps and a sophisticated environmental system which included vapour barriers, warm air curtains, fog dispersal plants and horizontal and vertical lightweight blinds.].

[303] Price, *The Square Book*, p. 56.

[304] It is not "constructivism" specifically within the scope of the Russian vanguards that is in question here, but instead the reductionist purpose of "dismounting" objects, occurring both in modernism and the historical avant-garde movements.

- *articulable units constituting the city*

At urban territory scale, I propose to use *L'Architecture Mobile* by Yona Friedman as a reference – a manifest defending the manipulation of artifacts by its inhabitants. In 1997, Friedman writes a text called "Interview with Myself (A Kind of Balance)" under the format of an interview with two characters created from an autobiographical split into the architect as an old man and as a young man. In this context, between the "balance" and fictional split of himself, Friedman put the following words in the mouth of the young architect:

> The beginning of mobile architecture came about in 1949. To be fair, the inhabitant should make the decisions and the labour of the architect should be to assist and help him make these decisions.[305]

Friedman writes this text when he is 74 years old, approximately 50 years after he began his research into "mobile architecture" and since the *Movable Boxes* housing project in which he proposes that the inhabitants should decide as to the configuration of their houses. He continues to pursue an ontological dimension for architecture with an unusual rigour and radicalism (I shall return to this theme in chapter II-2). In addition to being the paradigm of Friedman's production, *L'Architecture Mobile* is the title of the 1956 manifest that established him. It is based on the idea that rather than just be consulted about them, the inhabitants should determine the forms that they inhabit. The manifest is enlarged in 1960, with emphasis on the urban scale and the problem with city growth, creating a model of urbanism whose "three-dimensional technique" Friedman calls "urbanisme spatial"[306]. It is in this context of theoretical references that the *La Ville Spatiale* appears, which Friedman develops from 1958 to 1962 [65]. As Sabine Lebesque and Helene Fentener van Vlissingen relate:

> The essential component of *La Ville Spatiale* is what Friedman calls a *spatial infrastructure* – a multilevel space-frame grid ten metres above ground level, supported by columns at intervals of between forty and sixty metres. The grid is based on a six-metre module that can accommodate all desired functions. Small volumes such as rooms, which add minimal loading, can be supported by this grid. Large spaces, such as halls, streets, and courtyards, are situated between the columns at ground level because of their heavier structural loads. This structure is the *fixed* part of the city; the mobile part consists of the walls, floors, and partitions. These allow the individual occupant to determine his own spatial layout, the 'filling-in' of the infrastructure.[307]

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[305] Friedman, *Pro Domo*, p. 27.
[306] Sabine Lebesque & Helene Fentener van Vlissingen, *Yona Friedman: Structures Serving the Unpredictable* (exhibition catalogue), Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 1999, p. 22.
[307] *Ibidem*, pp. 29-30.

This enunciation, which provides for a general urban scale structure filled with mobile units, is in line with what will be designated as a "megastructure"[308] and, for Friedman, results from the conjugation of a technical possibility and the aspiration for freedom. He explains:

> The two most important impulses in 20th century architecture, or as it seems to me, are 1) space-frame structures (invented by Alexander Graham Bell and popularized by Konrad Waschmann) and 2) the Merzbau of Kurt Schwitters, geometrical and emotional order. (...) Unifying the concept of space-frame structures (industrialization) and that of Merzbau (extreme emotional individualism) seemed to me the right answer to the social context.[309]

Friedman is simultaneously the precursor and a member of the megastructuralist generation. He precedes them by a few years. He precedes, namely, the technically advanced research of Price and the evolution of urban planning theory in the sense of the *Non-Plan*[310].

Next, I shall illustrate the possibility of works being totally or partially **mobile**. These works are also conceived to change over time but, now, what is in question is the *location* of elements that may eventually become stable.

Transportable residential units are included among the oldest works of architecture, to the extent that they include the typology of tents – an architecture which, for example, some nomad societies resort to. In turn, the residential units "on wheels" also have a long history. They arise as the result of the expansion of the space inside carriages and are developed up to the models of trailers and motor homes[311]. The universe of works that I shall examine next is therefore that of mobility, from *walking* to vehicles.

The examples I am going to use are not, however, tents and *trailers*, but instead cases in which they are the theme of the architects' work, or else projects that acquire their specific characteristics. In this sense, I propose to identify:

- *works that include moveable parts*

  The *Naked House*, by Ban, is from 2000 [66 . 67]. It is made up of an ample longitudinal space with a height corresponding to two floors. In one of the tops, the space possesses sanitary facilities with the height of just one floor. Kitchen areas or contiguous spaces for the sanitary facilities can be delimited by curtains with the same height. But, despite the existence of these small special-purpose areas, the house is mainly made up of "general" space – continuous and with a scale that is closer to a hangar rather than what is normal for domestic spaces. The mobile units – the reason this project is mentioned here – circulate in this hangar. They are rooms on wheels that provide inhabitable spaces,

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[308] See: Reyner Banham, *Megaestruturas: Futuro Urbano del Passado Reciente*, transl. Ramon Font, 2nd ed., Barcelona: Gustavo Gilli, 2001 [originally published as: *Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1976].
[309] Friedman, *Pro Domo*, p. 48.
[310] See: Hughes & Sadler (eds.), *Non-Plan*.
[311] See, among others: Robert Kronenburg, *Houses in Motion: The Genesis, History and Development of the Portable Building*, London: Academy Editions, 1995; Robert Kronenburg, *Flexible: Architecture that Responds to Change*, London: Laurence King Publishing, 2007; Véronique Willemin, *Maisons Mobiles*, Paris: Editions Alternatives, 2004;

both inside and on top, and can be arranged according to the family's wishes: together or separate, near a window or equipment, placed on the periphery of the space or used as divisions for distinct spaces.

Mobility can also constitute a resource in urban projects. I do not mean the vehicles that circulate there, but the possibility of the actual logic of urban configuration contemplating constructions with mobile sectors. This is what happens in the delirious *Flying City*, conceived in 1928 by Georgy Tikhonovich Krutikov – a project that belongs to the scope of urban research on "aero-cities", typical of soviet vanguards. Krutikov's proposal is based on the possibility of moving all the inhabitants of a city into an individual "cabin" that could fly in the air, on the ground, above and below water. The cabin, as well as a means of transport, has a convertible interior in order to perform the different essential duties of a house. Despite being autonomous, the cabin can also be coupled to a fixed house, thus extending it, or coupled to the common area adjacent to a set of houses. The most delirious aspect of this project is related to the intention of using the surface of the planet for agriculture, industrial production, leisure and tourism, while sending housing and institutional buildings into the airspace. The cabin can therefore be coupled to these houses, seeing that it is also an air vehicle.

- *works that are mobile*

Within this category, I would like to mention works associated to the different means of locomotion. Because their scale is similar to that of architecture, large vehicles are often used as a support for constructions, which therefore become mobile. It is the universe, namely, of the *trailers*, or the various different types of equipment that are assembled on different semi-trailer truck.

Another, if less common, possibility is a "building" manipulated by its own body – small and light enough to be able to do this. An example of this is the *Tumble House*, conceived by the collective Koers-Zeinstra-Van Gelderen, in 1998 imagem. It is a small garden shed, faceted in a way that allows it to rotate on its own axis and be placed in six different positions. It can change, in the same way that a garden transforms during the seasons and over the years.

Even more unusual are the proposals to make larger scale constructions mobile – proposals that mainly arise as part of fictional conjectures. That is what happens, for example, within the production of the collective Archigram. Mobility is no longer related to any aspects of a practical order. It is put at the service of the construction of images of a hyper-technological future which (though without the credulity of the constructivist aero-cities of the 1920s) depend more on image production techniques than architecture production techniques. That is what we generally see in the projects for mobile cities. The *Walking City* is an urban agglomerate constituted by a set of zoomorphic units with the ability to move at planetary scale. Ron Herron also proposes an oceanic version of this city, while Warren Chalk proposes *Underwater City*, a submarine-city.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, works are conceived that are transportable by the human body. It is this that happens with any camping tent that is taken in a backpack when one goes on holiday. However, this possibility opens up a field of experimentation that goes beyond mere portability and adopts the relationship between body and work as its theme. This is what happens in *Suitaloon* that Michael Webb, also a member of the Archigram collective, develops between 1967 and 1968 [69]. It is a suit which, when inflated, transforms into a tent. In the words of Hadas A. Steiner,

> The project experimented with the McLuhanesque view of clothing as housing, but while even a spacesuit was still a suit, the Suitaloon blurred the boundaries between different kinds of bodily enclosures, of buildings and clothes, of inside and outside. The difference between the flexibility of the capsule and that of the inflatable suit was that when you wanted to be home, your suit inflated to enclose you.[312]

The artist Lucy Horta has also dedicated herself to similar considerations, developing artifacts (in this case with an artistic function) that are hybrids of tents and clothing [70].

In these last examples, the assumption that I am dealing with works whose instability is mechanical starts to lose validity. We are entering into an area of ambiguity between human skin and construction skin, or between the human organism and the architectural device – the type of architecture advocated by Marshall McLuhan[313]. The machine stops being external to the body and operates as a prosthetic device, showing, as McLuhan finds out during the 1960s[314], that the condition of the machine is no longer that of an object subordinated to the individual, but simply a means of relationship between individuals (thus turned into *cyborgs*) and an environment that strongly affects that relationship. In this sense, one shouldn't be surprised that in 1968, within the scope of the production of the Archigram collective, Peter Cook invents glasses with lenses in which you see television[315].

B.2) works involving **substantial** instability

As I mentioned earlier, this category ranges between works in which the instability relates mainly to the elements of limitation of space and works in which the theme is the inhabitable environment, in itself an unstable substance. I shall start off illustrating the first of these possibilities – works whose instability is **epidermal**.

Once again, tents are a timeless example. What is in question now is not their portability, but rather the fact that their construction is reduced to a "skin" to which only the elements necessary for it to conform

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[312] Hadas A. Steiner, *Beyond Archigram: The Structure of Circulation*, New York/London: Routledge, 2009, p.170.
[313] Marshall McLuhan, "Housing: New Look and New Outlook", in *Understanding Media: The Extentions of Man,* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 3rd ed, 1967 [originally published in 1964].
[314] See: Marshall McLuhan & Quentin Fiore, *The Medium Is the Message: An Inventory of Effects*, New York: Bantam Books, 1967.
[315] In relation to proposals for "architecture for the body" see: Dominique Rouillard, "Corps-Machines", "Environnement Minimal, Existence Maximale" and "Urologie", in *Superarchitecture: Le Futur de l'Architecture 1950-1970*, Paris: Éditions de La Villette, 2004, pp. 221-232, 232-241 and 242-246.

a space are added. The skin in itself is not rigid. It remains fixed in a certain position only to the extent that it is subject to external forces. It is this also that occurs when the elements that configure the space are inflatable, in other words, when the air trapped within two epidermal layers forces them to take up the intended form.

Examples of this type can be found in constructions as common as home swimming pools or beach castles for children. They are temporary constructions and, for that reason, the great difference that exists between the size they acquire when inflated and the tiny volume they take up when they are deflated for storage or transport is a great advantage. Of greater sophistication are the structures that have been created by the British company Inflate. The *Big M*, for example, is a pavilion with inflatable walls produced in 2005, designed to lodge an itinerant exhibition on digital art. Composed of three equal panels, that are reflected directly in their tripartite composition, the *Big M* can be transported in the same van as the three people needed to assemble it.

Next, I shall illustrate the type of works whose instability is related to the fact that they are limited to creating an **atmospheric** conditioning. I would like to start off with an artwork which is not a work of conceptual art and that follows the format of an architecture proposal. Its title is *Architecture of the Air*, it is from 1959 and is the product of collaboration between Yves Klein and Werner Ruhnau [71]. It has been used as a reference in architectural discourse by authors such as Hill[316] or Dominique Rouillard[317]. In this architecture of the air, the inhabitable space is fully continuous with the terrain, and cannot be classified as "indoor". It is composed only of a glass pavement and a ceiling made of projected air. Besides this "air-conditioning", there are only a few other spaces located under the glass, below ground level, for support and storage equipment. With regard to this work, Klein explains:

> I was to arrive in my development at an architecture of the air, because only there could I finally produce and stabilize pictorial sensibility in the raw material state. Until this point in still very precise architectonic space, I have been painting monochromes in the most enlightened manner possible; the still very material color sensibility must be reduced to a more pneumatic immaterial sensibility. Werner Ruhnau, for his part, is certain that the architecture of today is underway toward the immaterialization of the cities of tomorrow. (...) By using air and gases and sound as elements of architecture, this development can be carried ahead further. My walls of fire, my walls of water, like the roofs of air, are materials for the construction of a new architecture. With these three classical elements, fire, air, and water, the city of tomorrow will be constructed, flexible at last, spiritual and immaterial.[318]

Klein uses the term "pneumatic" to refer to a proposal with no inflatable elements. In fact, "pneumatic" is a word that can be used in two senses: it may refer specifically to construction entities that depend on the presence of air, or may refer to the air itself. The word "pneumatics", as a noun, designates a scientific area

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[316] Hill, *Actions of Architecture*, p. 136.
[317] Rouillard, *Superarchitecture*, p. 140.
[318] Yves Klein, *Conférence de la Sorbonne* (3rd June 1959), quoted in Gilbert Perlein & Bruno Corà, *Yves Klein: Long Live the Immaterial* (exhibition catalogue), Nice: Musée d'Art Contemporaine / Prato: Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci, 2000, p. 222.

that addresses the movement of matter in a gaseous state. It is in this second sense that Klein uses "pneumatic" to describe the essence to which he seeks to reduce sensibility to art.

This same difference is at the heart of the distinction that should be drawn between works with solid elements stabilised by air and those that *are* the air itself – a distinction established by Banham in the book *The Architecture of the Well-tempered Environment* which he publishes in 1969 (four years after "A Home is Not a House"). About the dismountable pavilion that, in 1959, the architect Victor Lundy conceives in association with the inflatables specialist Walter Bird for the United States Atomic Energy Commission, Banham states:

> It (...) presents us with a total reversal of traditional roles in architecture and environmental management. Instead of a rigid built volume to which power must be applied to correct its environmental deficiencies, we have here either a volume which is not built and rigid until environmental power is applied to it, or a manufactured environment (conditioned air) and a bag to put it in.[319]

The pavilion, as I was saying, can be understood either as a construction dependent on air or simply as air. According to the second perspective – that which I intend to refer to now – Banham considers it remarkable that, in the pavilion, there is "(...) shift from form and hardware to service and software"[320]. This is also what occurs in the *Environment-Bubble* [72].

The idea of creating a conditioned atmosphere with regard to which construction plays a subordinate role (which is common) and almost insignificant (which is extremely unusual) is also applicable to the *Blur Building* [73 . 74 . 75]. As I already mentioned, besides the pavement which cannot be walked on, the matter of the *Blur Building* only exists when a device destabilises the water of the lake on which it is located. The *Blur Building* is the destabilised water of that lake. More than a work, it is a circumstance, it is a situation. With regard to the intentions inherent to the project, Elizabeth Diller explains:

> We wanted to synthesize architecture and technology in a way that each would exchange the characteristics of the other, that is to say, de-materialize architecture and to materialize technology. But materialize, not in the sense of hardware, but in the sense of making certain things palpable, that are usually invisible. (...) Besides wanting to foil the conventions of heroic Expo and Fair architecture we wanted to delve into the aesthetics of nothing and engage in substance without form.[321]

Diller gives notice of intentions of a more political order, related to the monumental and representative nature of the buildings (in this specific case, those exhibited in International Fairs), but this is a theme that shall only be examined during the second part of this dissertation. For now, most important is the fact that *Blur Building* is an experiment regarding the materiality of construction which, as Diller says, tends to reduce matter to next to nothing. This imponderability of the matter that composes the "building" is also

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[319] Banham, *The Architecture of the Well-tempered Environment*, p. 276.
[320] Nigel Whiteley, *Reyner Banham: Historian of the Immediate Future*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 2002, p. 208 [(...) shift from form and hardware to service and software.].
[321] Elizabeth Diller, "Defining Atmosphere: The Blur Building", in http://museum.doorsofperception.com/doors6/doors6/transcripts/diller.html (quoted in Hill, Immaterial Architecture, p. 95).

accentuated by the fact that it is vulnerable to climate conditions. The sprayed water reacts in different ways to the temperature and humidity of the surrounding air and, due to its instability, is subject to the movements that the wind causes. Diller describes the *Blur Building* saying,

> So, on a windy day, it will have a long tail and part of the structure will probably be slightly stripped; and on a hot, humid day, the mist will tend to expand outwards; while on a day with low humidity, the fog will fall and drift in the direction of the wind; and on a cool day with low humidity, the fog will tend to rise upwards and evaporate. In addition, if the air temperature falls below lake temperature, a convection current will lift the fog.[322]

The physical characteristics of the *Blur Building* – its form and the consistency of its matter – depend, therefore, both on the activation of the device that manages it and on the climactic variations that it is subject to. In contrast to what occurs in the projects that seek only to create an area of air-conditioning, the matter of the *Blur Building* is not invisible, for the person "inside" it or for those who see it from a distance. It seeks to provide a sensory experience and constitutes an intervention on the landscape. It performs a function that lies somewhere between the entertainment of a hall of mirrors or that of a ghost train (which entertain people because they disturb or impede perception) and romantic *folie* (which is an "aesthetic event" that embellishes the landscape). To this extent, despite having been made, *Blur Building* is less of an architecture project than the projects that define areas of air conditioning that are intended to be *inhabited*.

C)

The following paragraph that I established to deal with the materiality of conceptual art works – paragraph C) – relates to the possibility of transcending materiality through the way that the public comes into contact with the work. I believe that if such a strategy were applied to architecture works, that experience would have nothing to do with the project. This would be an artistic experience that resorts to the public introduction of the project as its own subject-matter.

D) departing from the materiality of the work in favour of artistic modes which consist only in actions without a productive purpose

Finally, it is necessary to examine the possibility of departing from materiality in favour of architectural practices that consist only in actions without any sort of productive purpose. "Performance action as architecture" is not a new theme in this dissertation. I have already examined it in relation to types of idea that may constitute a project. I argued, at that time, that *inhabiting* may be an architectural practice to the extent that (1) it is capable of achieving that status (such as *squatting*, which results from an artistic intention that is publicly recognisable) or (2) the action of inhabiting has the capacity to transform the inhabited support (as in a manipulable work that is only completed with the actual *inhabiting*).

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[322] *Ibidem*, (quoted in Hill, Immaterial Architecture, p. 94).

The first type of action acquires autonomy in relation to the physical entity that serves as its support. If a building that was occupied is abandoned by *squatters*, it is no longer a *squatting* "work". It is, once again, just a building. This is in fact a performance work. As is the case of conceptual art, the work only lasts as long as what is performed there remains active.

The same can be said about the second type of action. In fact, it already has been. Seeing Price's projects, such as the *Fun Palace* or the *Inter-Action Centre,* as performance works and viewing them as unstable works, are inseparable possibilities. When the material destabilization of the work of architecture takes place through its use, action and construction become *inseparable as a work*.

Similarly to works of conceptual art that are performed by devices, I would also like to mention a small project by Ito dating back to 1986 – the *Tower of Winds* [76]. It is an intervention regarding an outer layer for a water reservoir and a ventilation exhaust in a part of Yokohama with a great deal of road traffic. Since this is a cosmetic project, Ito resorted to interactive technology in order to create a "skin" whose image is under constant transformation. The *Tower of Winds* is an illuminated device that reacts to wind and to noise. It is described in the following manner in the *El Croquis* magazine,

> There are 1,280 mini-lamps and 12 white ring-like neons inside the tower, and 30 flood lights at the base of the tower (6 outside the tower and 24 inside the tower). These lights draw various patterns as they are controlled by a personal computer which is placed at the foot of the tower. The patterns of light changes in accordance with the wind direction and velocity, and thus surrounding noises. The movement of light is controlled as if it were environmental music.[323]

The *Tower of Winds* reacts to external phenomena, changing its own image as induced by the dynamics of those phenomena. This project is a very interesting experiment around the *image*, but I wouldn't consider it architecture as such. Its spatial implications are connected, at most, with the way that it organises the public space around it, as with any sculpture placed in a public space. It is spectacular urban wrapping paper.

In this way, I have traversed the different acceptations of materiality that I detected in works of conceptual art, considering its applicability within the scope of the architecture project. Starting off with the classification structure I defined for conceptual art, the results of this analysis can be summarised as follows:

[323] *El Croquis* 71 (1995), p. 50.

A) reducing the materiality of the work to a purely instrumental condition		- immediate and unaffected construction - reduction of artifacts to infrastructures
B) adopting materiality as a thematic field for experimentalism which, in opposition to the traditional stability of the work of art, explores "new materialities"	b.1) works involving mechanical instability	articulated works - articulated space-defining elements - articulated building components - articulated urban elements
		mobile works - works that include moveable parts - works that are mobile
	b.2) works involving substantial instability	epidermal works
		atmospheric works
C)		
D) departing from the materiality of the work in favour of artistic modes that consist only in actions without a productive purpose		

The main problem with this table arises from the fact that the articulated works and the mobile works that are provided in paragraph B.1) are the same as those in paragraph D). It is the most evident problem that appears when it comes to the applicability of the items established for conceptual art to the architecture project. This is a direct result of a distinctive factor of works of architecture that is essential in order to consider their instability – their use. Works of architecture are interaction devices with those who inhabit them. It is inherent to works of architecture that they are subject to that interaction. This is what they are for, regardless of more or less repercussions on the form of the works. The ambiguity that the table reveals is related to the fact that the interaction can be observed, both from the perspective of the device or from the perspective of the action.

I propose to revaluate the table making this the determining factor. In that sense, I am going to reorganise the different modes of understanding the materiality of the work, starting off by distinguishing between (1) the work as a *constructive entity*, or in other words, considered as an entity in itself and (2) the work as a *device*, or in other words, viewed as an *actionable entity*. While the works that are simple constructive entities can be analysed as static and autonomous objects, works that are devices only acquire sense to the extent that they are activated. They are dependent and transitory.

Adopting this perspective, we can see that:

- Paragraph A) is related to the qualities of the work itself.
- Paragraph B) has to be divided: all the subcategories are related to aspects of interactivity, except the experiences in which the work is understood as an epidermal entity – a question that relates to the work itself.

- Paragraph D) becomes coincident with paragraph B), apart from the exception I have just identified.

In order to compete the classification of works of architecture as entities, this table will result from crossing-referencing this distinction with another that I have already established and that I shall now apply to the consideration of materiality in general. I refer to the distinction between the *mechanical and substantial* qualities of matter. The former relate to the arrangement of the matter; the latter to its constitution. From the cross-reference between these dichotomous factors results the following:

	a) mechanical quality	b) substantial quality
I. the work as a constructive entity	**I.a) works with purely instrumental materiality** - immediate and unaffected construction - reduction of artifacts to infrastructures	**I.b) works that involve epidermal instability**
II. the work as a device	**II.a) mechanically interactive works** articulated works - articulated elements defining spaces - articulated building units - articulated urban units mobile works - works that include mobile parts - works that are mobile	**II.b) works that can be activated as an atmosphere**

Similarly to what I did with regard to conceptual art, I shall end this chapter mentioning that the experimentation around the matter carried out in these works tends towards "zero-point of work" – in the case of architecture:

I.a) the zero-point of the status of matter;

I.b) the zero-point of closing matter;

II.a) the zero-point of static matter;

II.b) the zero-point of matter.

In 1965, at a lecture, Buckminster Fuller wonders about the future of architecture:

> (...) we are working towards the invisible house – what will you do with architecture then?[324]

It is not my intention to talk about the future of architecture, but Fuller's doubt seems a good way to evoke the consequences of this type of experiment on materiality: the architectural artifacts are placed at the service of a *self-reflexive* scrutiny – the theme of the second part of this dissertation.

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[324] Buckminster Fuller, excerpt from a lecture, quoted in Whiteley, *Reyner Banham*, p. 185 [originally published: *Megascope* 3 (November 1965)].

theme II

The work reveals infrastructural aspects of artistic practice.

1 conceptual art

conditions for a work to be conceptual:	
I The work is the literal translation of an idea.	**II** The work reveals infrastructural aspects of artistic practice.

theme I – 1 conceptual art	theme II – 1 conceptual art
theme I – 2 architecture	theme II – 2 architecture

From what was described in chapter “I-1 conceptual art” we can see that, in the context of conceptual art, the formal and material status of the work of art is greatly downplayed, when not actually suppressed. The formal and material qualities of the work are no longer factors of its valuation. They are placed at the service of either literalness or its own self-questioning in the cases when it is precisely the formal and material status of the work that is taken as the theme. In this chapter, I propose to analyse the characteristics of the work of conceptual art in as far as concerns, not its appearance, but the function it acquires and which converges with that appearance.

I shall start this chapter by introducing the theme of self-reflexivity – the function of the work of conceptual art – in a general manner. Then, I shall discuss it specifically regarding the two extremes that delimit its scope – the reduction of the work to the pure definition of “artistic” and the consideration of the framework of artistic practice. In other words, this is about, respectively defining an autonomous territory for art and considering the political aspects involved in artistic practice. From this point, I shall examine the fact that conceptual art is historically and ideologically associated to the “administrative universe” and argue that the works, more than representing that universe, result from a type of operativity, itself characterised by “administrative procedures”. Finally, I shall address the “lack of quality” of the works that result from the adoption of merely administrative (and not formal) procedures as well as the crucial function of that “lack of quality” so that the work – by means of the disillusionment it causes – triggers the phenomenon of self-reflection. I shall finish off by listing specific modes which, based on the paradigm of “doing nothing”, result in that productive “lack of quality”.

The work of conceptual art is devoid of any theme external to the consideration of art itself[325]. It is art about art: about the definition of art; about the material and communicative contingency of the artistic object; about the mechanisms of diffusion, acknowledgment and valuation of the work. More specifically, I can state the examples of research around linguistic mechanisms inherent to the communicative capabilities and limitations of art (a more universalistic theme), or around the uses of power that determine the action of cultural institutions (a more conjunctural theme).

In order to perform this role, the work of art stands between two operative paradigms:

- The work has a "theme", but that theme is a determined aspect inherent to artistic practice itself. This is what occurs, for example, when in 1966 and 1967 Kosuth presents dictionary definitions of "meaning" [111], "idea" or "art" as artworks, in the series *Titled (Art as Idea as Idea)*. This is also what happens in *Gallery-Visitor's Profile* which Haacke produces repeatedly between 1969 and 1973 [144]. This work consists in collecting information about the characteristics of the visitors to galleries (age, sex, religion, ethnic background, social class, profession, etc.), in order to achieve statistical data demonstrating how the status of "work of art" depends on the status of their respective venues, which in turn depends on the status of the people visiting those places.
- the work is emptied of content and reduced to the expression of its own condition as a work of art. Under these circumstances, the work of art operates as an *example* of "artwork". As Nelson Goodman analyses,

> Exemplification is possession plus reference [note 5: Ostension, like exemplification, has to do with samples; but whereas ostension is the act of pointing to a sample, exemplification is the relation between a sample and what it refers to]. To have without symbolizing is merely to possess, while to symbolize without having is to refer in some other way than by exemplifying. The swatch exemplifies only those properties that it both has and refers to.[326]

The concrete work of art expresses *determined* qualities of the work of art in general, thus performing an *exemplificative* function. To designate a certain entity as a "work of art" is an act that principally serves, through that designation, to draw conclusions about the nature of what is considered to be a "work of art".

This possibility that a work of conceptual art can be exemplificative presupposes a quite particular phenomenon: its *emptying*. An emptying in two senses. On the one hand, the work is emptied of *thematic content*; it does not present a theme external to the affirmation of its own

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[325] In the field of aesthetics, this possibility of "art about art" is paradigmatically analysed by Arthur C. Danto. see: Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: Harvard University Press, 6th ed., 1994 [originally published in 1981].
[326] Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968, p. 53.

condition as a work of art. (Emptied of content, the work of art is observed as one might observe a book in order to think about "the books" instead of reading a book in order to discover its content.) It is merely the affirmation of a determined product as a "work of art" which derives from the meaning of the work; and, at the same time, the meaning of the work is channelled to the scope of the self-reflexive, reverting its focus to its own condition. In view of one of these works, instead of asking "what is this work about?" all that can be asked is "is this an artwork?" and, consequently, "what values support the idea that this is an artwork?" or even, "what is an artwork?". This *absence of theme* that associates this type of questions to the cognition of the work should not be mistaken for the *absence of theme* typical to what is known as "abstract art" – a category of art which, in its different historical variants, explores the purely formal qualities of the work. And this leads us to the second aspect of the emptying. The work is also emptied of its *plastic content*. The work's *raison d'étre* is not related to factors of formal valuation, such as colour, texture, composition, volumetry, etc. Within the scope of conceptual art, the adjective "plastic" is considered obsolete, as also is the notion of "aesthetic value" as a factor related with the pleasure that art is capable of providing[327]. In short, works of conceptual art that are samples do not relate to any substance whether external (thematic), or internal ("plastic"). They are foreign to both substances, which results in a unique phenomenon that can be summarised as *substantive emptying of the work*.

These two operative paradigms are not mutually exclusive. For example, a work that provides the dictionary definition of "idea" or "meaning", in addition to clearly evoking those themes (within the paradigm of the "infrastructural theme"), also provides meaning as a result of the attribution of the status of "work of art" to a simple dictionary definition (which likens it to operating as do the works that reside within the paradigm of the "substantive emptying of the work").

In either case – whether directly as a result of the explicit production of discourse, or indirectly through the emptying that reduces the work to a sample – the work of conceptual art seeks, as I stated, the set of concepts underlying artistic practice. More than just *possessing* determined qualities, the artwork *reflects on* the assumptions – values and mechanisms – subjacent to those qualities, as if a mirror in which art sees and analyses itself and its own conjunctural condition. It points to the conjuncture in which artistic practices take place and where the work of art is contemplated as such. It is to this extent that the work of conceptual art is *self-reflexive*: it is art about art, art that reflects on itself.

Historiographically, conceptual self-reflexivity is viewed by Alexander Alberro as a development, or as a culmination, of modernist self-reflexivity. In his essay "Reconsidering Conceptual Art, 1966-1977", Alberro

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[327] Regarding the relationship between conceptual art and "aesthetic value", see: Elisabeth Schellekens, "The Aesthetic Value of Ideas", and Diarmuid Costello, "Kant After LeWitt: Towards an Aesthetic of Conceptual Art", in Peter Goldie & Elisabeth Schellekens (eds.) *Philosophy and Conceptual Art*, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 71-91 and 92-115.

identifies four trajectories in the historical development of art which, in his opinion, are precursors of conceptual art. Of these trajectories,

> The first includes the self-reflexivity of modernist painting and sculpture that systematically problematizes and dismantles the integral elements of the traditional structure of the art work. One of the recurring characteristics in much art that is referred to as conceptual is the consideration of every one of the constituting elements of the art work as equal components. In the process, the valuation of technical manual skill is largely (if not entirely) abandoned, as well as the notion of an original, cohesive work. In turn, serial and highly schematic structures emerge, placing the inherently hierarchical concept of quality under stress.[328]

Alberro refers to the practices which "problematize and dismantle the elements that integrate the traditional structure of the art work". Regarding this, I would like to clarify which specific type of self-reflexivity characterises conceptual art.

At first glance, Alberro seems to refer principally to the self-reflection that focuses on the material or visual elements of the work. It is the work as an object or as an image that is subject to an appraisal. The objectual qualities of the work are in question. A great variety of experiences can be put within this tradition, such as those which, in the scope of the historical avant-gardes, are developed in artistic movements such as cubism, neo-plasticism or Russian/soviet constructivism. In cubism, the pictorial components of the image are identified and disaggregated. In neo-plasticism, the compositional elements of the work are decanted (colour, form, spatial arrangement) and a pure expression is attributed to them. In constructivism, objects are reduced to structures and materials, eloquent respectively in the daringness of their balance and the expression of their texture. In either case, the elements of the work are emphasised, between the isolation of their pure state (the reductionist tendency in common with anatomy, or the Mendeleyev table) and their disruptive combination. They are no longer hierarchically harmonised in a coherent work, in which they take part without their individual presence being noted, and are the object of manifest inspection. And, in this way, they become the instrument of their own critical reassessment, in other words, simultaneously *agent* (within the specific scope of each work) and *object* (as samples of art in general) of self-reflection.

In conceptual art, self-reflexivity has a different focus: more than the characteristics of the artwork, it has implications on the assumptions and values inherent to artistic practices. To a greater extent than the *structure* of the artwork, conceptual self-reflexivity relates to the *infrastructural* aspects of artistic practices. Structural aspects can equally be designated as *constructive*: they refer to the physical or visual elements of the work and the manner in which they are placed in order to interrelate and constitute the "whole" that the work is. In turn, the infrastructural aspects are of an *abstract* order: they relate to the manner in which art operates as a system (linguistic, epistemological, social, etc.).

It is for this reason that, in conceptual art, the question of the *means* does not apply and categories such as "painting" or "sculpture" do not make any sense. There are merely instrumental precepts which,

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[328] Alexander Alberro & Blake Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art*, pp. xvi-xvii.

precisely because they are precepts, are contrary to questioning the bases of artistic production. In conceptual art, the aim is not to produce speculation within the scope of painting or sculpture, nor even to question the limits of painting or sculpture[329]. The object of the reflection is art. Categories as orthodox as "painting" or "sculpture" can, at most, serve as a reference to deal with the nature of art, as does Weiner when he substitutes sculptures with the enunciations of those sculptures, drawing attention to the material status of the work of art.

This is also the reason why the adjective "abstract" acquires a meaning that goes beyond the mere "absence of a figurative theme" that characterises so-called "abstract art", as well as others historically as close to conceptual art as minimalism or abstract expressionism. Conceptual art operates within an abstract field because its themes – not its forms – are abstract entities. Concerning this, the statement made by Mel Bochner in 1966, in his first critical essay published, should be noted:

> Old art attempted to make the non-visible (energy, feelings) visual (marks). New art is attempting to make the non-visual (mathematics) visible (concrete).[330]

The operativity of "new art" advocated by Bochner does not use the universe of conceptual art as its reference. It relates to the work of six of the 42 artists present at the exhibition *Primary Structures*[331]: Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Sol LeWitt, Donald Judd, Robert Morris and Robert Smithson. The art that Bochner is talking about is a transition art between minimalism and conceptual art. To be more specific, it is an art of transition regarding the "adoption of mathematical logic as a de-subjectivised replacement of the subjective composition of form" to the "form as material translation of mathematical logic" – a decisive difference from a conceptual point of view. According to Adrian Piper, the exhibition of mathematical logic (which the author associates to LeWitt) also plays a founding role in relation to conceptual self-reflexivity. He writes:

> By the mid-1960s, Sol LeWitt further developed [the] notion of self-reflexive content: By insisting on the primacy of the idea of the work over its medium of realization, LeWitt created the context in which the cognitive content of a work could have priority over its perceptual form. And by using the permutation of selected formal properties of an object – its sides, dimensions, or geometrical shape – as a decision procedure for generating the final form of the work as a permutational system, LeWitt moved that system itself, and the idea of that system, into the foreground of the work as its self-reflexive subject matter. Here it is not only the object as a unique particular that has primacy, but that object as the locus and origin of the conceptual system it self-reflexively

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[329] Despite the autonomy of art based on the media used by "each art" as advocated by Clement Greenberg being subject to an attack by the conceptualists, Osborne claims that: "The discursive conditions for this transference of cultural authority [from philosophy to art] were established by Greenberg, in the idea of Modernist art as self-critical art which explores the definition of its medium. (This notion of self-criticism was already an explicitly philosophical idea, borrowed directly from Kant's *Critique of Reason*.)" Peter Osborne, "Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy", in Michael Newman & Jon Bird (eds.), *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, London: Reaktion Books, 1999, p. 50.

[330] Bochner, Mel, "Primary Structures: A Declaration of a New Attitude as Revealed by an Important Current Exhibition", in *Solar Systems & Rest Rooms: Writings and Interviews 1965-2007*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 2008, p. 10. [originally published in *Arts Magazine*, vol. 40, no. 8, June 1966, p. 32-35].

[331] This exhibition has already been mentioned in chapter I-1.

> generates. From there it was only a short step to conceptual art's insistence in the late 1960s on the self-reflexive investigation of concepts and language themselves as the primary subject matter of art.[332]

It is to the extent that mathematics ceases to be used as a compositional instrument (to circumvent subjectivity) and is revealed as an epistemological starting point (of thought in general and of art in particular) that it can integrate an artistic intention of a *conceptual* nature. It is no longer at the service of the *visual* and becomes a *non-visual* thematic content. I am using the example of mathematics because it is to this that Bochner refers in order to illustrate the "transition of non-visual elements to the field of the visible"[333]. But these are not the only elements that can emerge, visibly, in an artwork. A number of different infrastructural aspects of artistic practice emerge, visibly, in works of conceptual art. *It is an essential assumption of this chapter that the "action of making aspects of the non-visual order visible" characterises the set of artistic practices that can be considered conceptual*.

The focus on themes of a non-visual nature has extremely significant consequences in as far as concerns the position that visuality assumes in art. Traditionally, the analysis of a work focuses on the interpretation of its formal content and / or its expression – subjects enclosed within the appearance of the work and, in that way, of a *visual* order. That which is visual possesses autonomy as a signifier entity, whether it is figurative[334] or abstract art. In the work of conceptual art, this is not what happens. The work, in its visual condition, is no more than a *datum* about a non-visual formulation – a datum that witnesses a cogitation by its author and in relation to which the receiver of the work develops an eminently cognitive exercise. Some works are particularly clear in this regard; for example, the definition of "art" taken from a dictionary and presented by Kosuth as an artwork confronts the public with the fact that the appreciation of any work depends on the understanding one has as to what art is (and the definition of art, the most central infrastructural aspect of artistic practice, is a non-visual entity).

However, not always does the content of the work have such a clearly non-visual nature. This is namely the case with works in which the definition of the "artwork" is placed as a problem of a material order. In those cases, naturally, the visual aspects of the work acquire relevance *as a theme*. This is what occurs in works which, in the first chapter, I addressed as an example of what can be a materiality B) laboratorial or C) imaginary. But even in these works, visuality does not acquire the value it is traditionally given. It does not perform the same duty. Even when visuality has central importance from a thematic perspective, in finds itself "inside out". It is taken as a theme, but only to be relativized or refuted in its

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[332] Adrian Piper, "The Logic of Modernism", in *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, p. 213 [originally published in *Flash Art* 26, no. 168, January-February 1993, pp. 56-58, 118 and 136].

[333] This is in fact the most significant aspect of de-subjectivised processes for the generation of form mentioned in sub-chapter "1. process".

[334] Even if the theme of a determined work were to be, for example, melancholy, which is not visual, the receiver of the approached that theme through empathy, both by means of the fictional entities represented and by means of the emotional environment originated through formal aspects such as colour – both of which are visual aspects.

concrete manifestations – in other words, only for its importance to be downplayed or denied as a perceptive component of the work. This phenomenon is patent in the works covered by paragraph B), in which the work loses its material stability (even to the point of being *invisible*), and even more so in the works covered by paragraph C), in which the presence of the work is replaced by its fictional evocation or by its significant absence. In either case, visuality has no value in its own right and is only invoked as a factor inherent to the definition of "artwork" – a definition which, itself, is a non-visual entity. Let us compare what it is to stand before a canvas painted entirely in yellow and what it is to stand before an invisible work. In both these situations, the receiver undergoes an eminently visual experience but, while the first work provides the pure experience of colour (a visual entity), the "visual absence of the work" seeks to question the concept of "artwork" (as mentioned above, a non-visual entity). In the operative conceptual conjuncture, visuality is more relevant as a *conceptual component* of reflection on art than as a *formal component* of the work. It acquires relevance mainly due to the circumstance, or the coincidence, that it too is a conceptual aspect of reflection on art.

In order to characterise this operative context (and taking Bochner's terms as a reference), more than merely speaking of "visuality", one should speak of "visibility"[335]. *The work brings visibility to entities or phenomena that, due to their non-visual nature, do not possess this. It operates as a device that renders visible that which is within the domain of the non-visual*, as does an electrocardiograph that registers heart beats on paper, or a thermometer that changes colour according to the temperature. In this sense, conceptual self-reflexivity promotes revelation (in other words, makes a certain something visible so that it can be perceived) or even, exposition (in other words, makes a certain something visible in order to shed light on its vices).

The scope of the *non-visual* is the scope that I designate as "infrastructural aspects of artistic practice" – the different aspects according to which art is defined and considered as well as the different aspects of a conjunctural order which condition the production of art. I am referring to the references, to the values or, to use a more adequate designation, the *concepts* that impart a structure to the analysis of art. It is these concepts that the *conceptual* artwork seeks, in a more or less direct manner. In the words of Victor Burgin,

> (...) art as language, as "software", consists of sets of conditions, more or less closely defined, according to which particular concepts may be demonstrated.[336]

Although providing visibility to infrastructural aspects of artistic practices – the concepts – can be considered a defining feature for all conceptual art, there are however several diverging currents as to *which*

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[335] An argument is built at this point which will later be put into question due to its radicalism. In fact, I believe that the visual aspects of work play an important, if quite particular, role.
[336] Burgin, "Situational Aesthetics", p. 79.

infrastructural aspects should be rendered visible, that is, *what* should the object of self-reflection be. One of the authors who constructs a more encompassing outlook with regard to the object of conceptual self-reflection is Edward A. Shanken who, in this extract that comes close to creating a definition of "conceptual art", writes:

> Conceptual art has sought to analyze the ideas ["concepts", according to the terminology I adopt here] underlying the creation and reception of art, rather than to elaborate another stylistic convention in the historical succession of Modernist avant-garde movements[337]. Investigations by Conceptual artists into networks of signification and structures of knowledge (that enable art to have meaning) have frequently employed text as a strategic device to examine the interstice between visual and verbal languages as semiotic systems. In this regard, Conceptual art is a metacritical and self-reflexive art process. It is engaged in theorizing the possibilities of signification in art's multiple contexts (including its history and criticism, exhibitions, and markets). In interrogating the relationship between ideas ["concepts"] and art, Conceptual art de-emphasizes the value traditionally accorded to the materiality of art objects. It focuses, rather, on examining the preconditions for how meaning emerges in art, seen as a semiotic system.[338]

This extract could almost be used to summarise this chapter of my dissertation. From the perspective of its self-reflexive purpose, conceptual art is to a large extent what Shanken enunciates here. However, I believe that this is a reductionist outlook. It is centred on building meanings. An artwork, in addition to building meanings, has an existence that can be analysed from more materialistic viewpoints – a possibility which Shanken does not address autonomously. Note for example how, when Shanken mentions "exhibitions and markets", he sees them as data relevant only to the extent that they are directly related to the task of "theorizing the possibilities of signification". From the perspective I propose here, this is not necessarily the case. As with other materialistic factors, phenomena such as exhibitions and markets may perfectly well constitute an object of self-reflection in their own right. To Shanken's vision others can be added, such as, for example, what John Roberts proposes in *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade*[339], or what Pierre Bourdieu and Hans Haacke jointly propose in *Free Exchange*[340]. I shall later return to these authors' viewpoint. In order to start the discussion of the different objects of self-reflection, I would first like to distinguish between what is called "analytical conceptual art" and "synthetic conceptual art".

The self-reflexivity of conceptual art can affect a variety of themes. However, there are two paradigmatic areas of self-reflexivity – respectively those that seek the definition of art and the political contours of artistic practice. They have a historical relevance (because they were at the heart of divergences between artists), historiographical relevance (because they serve as a reference for the interpretation of the evolution of

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[337] I am not going to question whether conceptual art should be included in the so-called "modernism" or in "post-modernism". This discussion is not included within the purpose of this dissertation.
[338] Shanken, "Art in the Information Age: Technology and Conceptual Art", in Corris (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, pp. 236-237.
[339] John Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade*, London/New York: Verso, 2007.
[340] Pierre Bourdieu & Hans Haacke, *Free Exchange*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

conceptual art) and conceptual (because they are an essential theme for the theoretical and operative definition of “conceptual art”). I propose to discuss them in the two sub-chapters that follow. I believe that, in both cases, the discussion will help determine the disciplinary limits of self-reflexivity – whether the limit of what may be considered art centred on itself, or the limit of what art placed at the service of ideological contents might be.

autonomous art (*versus* the conjuncture of artistic practices)

The fact that conceptual art reflects on art itself is one of the few assumptions unanimously accepted as a defining element of the category. But, conversely, the specificity of the subject matters regarding which reflection takes place is the main cause of disagreement between the different acceptations of conceptual art.

This is the theme I shall address in this subchapter and the next. Firstly I shall discuss the possibility of a conceptual art that being emptied of any content apart from the presentation of a definition of "art", seeks to establish a territory of pure art – an *autonomous* field for art. Then I shall discuss conceptual art, which has the conjuncture of artistic practice as its theme. I shall address practices that tend to be politicised and examine the limits of that politicisation.

Kosuth argues that true conceptual art resides in a precise, or restricted, territory of reflexion. In "Art after Philosophy", in order to delimit that territory, Kosuth makes reference to the distinction established by the Englishman Alfred Jules Ayer – a renowned personage in analytical philosophy – between an "analytical proposition" and a "synthetic proposition". He quotes an extract of the work *Language, Truth, and Logic*, published in 1946, in which this philosopher states that

> A proposition is analytic when its validity depends solely on the definitions of the symbols it contains, and synthetic when its validity is determined by the facts of experience.[341]

An analytical proposition therefore contains validity within the actual stated proposition itself. This is what happens, for example, in a mathematical equation. The fact that "2 + 2 = 4" does not need to be verified in the "real world"; it can be taken for granted taking into consideration only the contents of the proposition itself. On the other hand, the fact "2 + 2 = 4" does not add anything to the mathematical logic that is part of the proposition, and according to which the validity of the proposition is assessed. To the extent that the mathematical equations add nothing to mathematics, they are *tautological*, in other words, they "say" nothing, limited to the redundant confirmation of their own logical universe. In contrast, a law of physics, such as regarding the velocity of a free-falling object is only valid to the extent that it can be verified in the "real world", to the extent that the mathematical equation that summarises that law is capable of describing what *in fact* happens to the objects. This is, therefore, a synthetic proposition.

Kosuth claims that true conceptual artworks are analytical propositions. They are propositions that do not require empirical verification (unlike synthetic propositions), nor do they escape logical understanding

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[341] Kosuth, "Art after Philosophy", p. 20.

(unlike the propositions that Ayer qualifies as metaphysical[342]). For Kosuth, works of conceptual art are tautological just like mathematics – an opinion illustrated literally, for example, in a work composed of five words in blue neon, called "five words in blue neon".

Tautology corresponds to a high level of substantive emptying of the work. The work says nothing. It is emptied of all content and made redundant in relation to itself. The thematic emptying of the work is a strategy for self-reflection found by Kosuth in the work of the abstractionist Ad Reinhardt. (Reinhardt's work provides a better illustration of the modernist affiliation of the conceptual art invoked by Alberro than works that dissect an artwork into its constructive or visual elements.) It is in Reinhardt's work that, in Kosuth's opinion, the idea of "autonomy of art" reaches its apogee before he develops his own acceptation of conceptual art. For Reinhardt,

> The one subject of a hundred years of modern art is that awareness of art of itself, of art preoccupied with its own process and means, with its own identity and distinction, art concerned with its own unique statement, art conscious of its own evolution and history and destiny, toward its freedom, its own dignity, its own essence, its own reason, its own morality and its own conscience. Art needs no justification with "realism" or "naturalism", "regionalism" or "nationalism", "individualism" or "socialism" or "mysticism", or with any other ideas.[343]

On the one hand, Reinhardt is not too different from abstract artists from the time of the historical avant-gardes. This passage can easily be read as an echo of the definition for "plastic art" which, in 1924, Theo van Doesburg proposes in the following manner:

> Plastic art is plastic expression using plastic means.

This sentence is almost redundant. But it summarises the fact that in the perspective of Theo van Doesburg,

> The plastic means (of each art) is the constructive matter of the aesthetic idea. (...) To the work of art that directly expresses the aesthetic idea, that is, with the expressive means characteristic of the art in question (for example, sounds, colours, masses, etc.), is called *exact* and *real*. We call it exact as opposed to the art work that seems to express the same idea through a more or less confusing means. (For example, with a symbol, a representation related to emotional or intellectual associations, states of mind or similar traits, etc.) We call it real in opposition to the art work where the plastic means are not exclusively conveyors of the organic unity, and serve the purpose of making the art work appear as an illusion of something different from the set constructed by these means [344]

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[342] The first sentence of "Sentences on Conceptual Art", by LeWitt, is "1. Conceptual Artists are mystics rather than rationalists". LeWitt, "Sentences on Conceptual Art", p. 222.

[343] Ad Reinhardt, '"Art-as-Art"', in Barbara Rose (ed.), *Art as Art: The Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt*, Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991, p. 53.

[344] Theo van Doesburg, "Principios del Nuevo Arte Plástico" (1924 version), in *Principios del Nuevo Arte Plástico y Otros Escritos*, ed. & transl. Charo Crego, Valencia: Colegio Oficial de Aparejadores y Arquitectos Técnicos de Murcia / Galería-Librería Yerba de Murcia / Consejería de Cultura y Educación de la Comunidad Autónoma de Murcia / Dirección General de Arquitectura y Vivienda del Mopu, 1985, pp. 84 and 72 [El arte plástico es expresión plástica con medios plásticos.] [El medio plástico (de todo arte) es la materia constructiva de la idea estética. (...) A la obra de arte que expresa de forma directa la idea estética, es decir, con el medio expresivo propio del arte en cuestión (por ejemplo, sonidos, colores, planos, masas, etc.), la llamamos *exacta* y *real*. La llamamos exacta en oposición a la obra de arte que intenta expresar esta misma idea con medios más o menos confusos (por ejemplo, con algún símbolo, con alguna

On the other hand, Reinhardt transitions from the question of the means of art and the constituents of the work to the actual definition of "art". Firstly, because his monochromatic canvasses are radically close to an absence of plastic content (they seem to reach the "zero of form" advocated by Malevich[345]). Then, because the texts he writes propose a tautological definition of art. In the same text from 1962 he wrote:

> The one thing to say about art is that it is one thing. Art is art-as-art and everything else is everything else. Art-as-art is nothing but art. Art is not what is not art.[346]

This reduction of the conditions necessary for a work to be considered art is extremely significant. This definition of art is not based on "thematic" or formal features of the work. For a work to be considered art, all it needs is to be given that status. "An artwork is an artwork" is a tautological statement, or simply redundant, but when the apparent characteristics of a work no longer provide the evidence that it is art, it is indeed necessary for it to be presented as art in order to be recognised and appreciated as such. This is the basic assumption behind institutionalist theories about the definition of art. But Kosuth (as also Reinhardt) does not confer the privilege of identifying what art is to the institutions socially capable of legitimising certain works. Besides not recognising the legitimacy of "art that requires empirical validation" (thus restricting art to the universe of the *analytical*), Kosuth is also uninterested in the factors on which the *social* recognition of a given artwork or artist depends (or, at least, this is not the issue that he wishes to transport to within artistic practice). Instead, he claims the artist's right to confer the status of art to his own works. There is a simple reason for this: for Kosuth, acknowledging an artwork as such is the same as proposing a definition of art, and "proposing a definition of art" is, from his point of view, *the* task that a real artist, that is, a conceptual artist, is dedicated to. He wrote:

> Works of art are analytic propositions. That is, if viewed within their context – as art – they provide no information what-so-ever about any matter of fact. A work of art is a tautology in that it is a presentation of the artist's intention, that is, he is saying that a particular work of art *is* art, which means, is a *definition* of art. Thus, that it is art is true *a priori* (which is what [Donald] Judd means when he states that "if someone calls it art, it's art").[347]

For Kosuth, an artwork serves to present a *concept* of art. Or in other words: the work is presented as a concept of art. The artist presents the work merely in order to say "This is art". The concept of art is the only possible "intention of the artist".

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representación relacionada con asociaciones sentimentales o intelectuales, con los estados de ánimos o las tendencias correspondientes, etc). La llamamos real en oposición a la obra de arte en la que los médios plásticos no son exclusivamente portadores de la unidad orgánica de la obra, sino que sirven para que la obra de arte aparezca como la ilusión de algo diferente al conjunto construido por estos medios (...).]

[345] See: Kasimir Malevich, "From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Realism in Painting", in Harrison & Wood (eds.), *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Oxford/Cambridge (Mass.): Blackwell, 12th edition, 1999, pp. 166-176.

[346] Ad Reinhardt, '"Art-as-Art"', in Barbara Rose (ed.), *Art as Art: The Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt*, Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991, p. 53.

[347] Kosuth, "Art after Philosophy", p. 20.

As the title of his renowned text "Art after Philosophy"[348] suggests, Kosuth advocates an art that replaces philosophy. The preposition "after" means that this title can be understood in two different ways. If "after" means "subsequent to", the title relates to an art that comes after philosophy in time. For Kosuth, philosophy still continues to perform the ancient task of defining "what is beautiful" and, following the implications of the Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, it is a discipline that, in its traditional acceptation, is outdated[349]. If "afterwards" means "according to" or "following", the title is suggesting that art follows on from philosophy in its task, because it has become responsible for its own definitions – for establishing its own *conceptual* definition. This should be, in Kosuth's opinion, the sole function of art. From his point of view, self-reflexivity does not just come from the fact that art reflects on itself (which can include a reflection about its relation with the exterior), but instead because it reflects on its own definition. He states:

> The "purest" definition of conceptual art would be that it is inquiry into the foundations of the concept "art", as it has come to mean.[350]

From this assumption, Kosuth does not simply argue for a conceptual art that is *analytical*, as opposed to conceptual art that is *synthetic*. From his point of view, only the former can be considered truly conceptual. He designates it as "theoretical conceptual art" in contrast to practices that he belittles with the designation of "stylistic conceptual art"[351].

The approximation to philosophy by Kosuth and other analytical conceptual artists is the subject of an essay by Osborne precisely with the title "Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy". Osborne notes that conceptual art attempts, in its historical context, to merge its own cultural field – that of artistic production – with that of philosophy and, in this way, to claim the cultural authority of philosophy[352]. But, regardless of this historiographical question, I would like to look into Osborne's reasoning, because I believe that it may be able to help identify the limit of the autonomy of art, in the acceptation that autonomy is given within the specific scope of conceptual art. Using the considerations made by Osborne as a reference, I will argue that the limit of autonomy is determined by two paradoxes – one regarding the "essence" of art (which, paradoxically, is found using philosophy as a reference); the other regarding the self-sufficiency of the affirmation by the artist that a determined entity constitutes art (which, paradoxically, depends on an institutional context). These are the two subjects that I will examine in the remaining pages of this sub-chapter.

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[348] Kosuth argued that art took the place that had been left free by the "end" of philosophy.
[349] Kosuth quotes J. O. Urmson: "Once one has understood the *Tractatus* there will be no temptation to concern oneself any more with philosophy, which is neither empirical like science nor tautological like mathematics; one will, like Wittgenstein in 1918, abandon philosophy, which, as traditionally understood, is rooted in confusion". Kosuth, "Art after Philosophy", p. 13.
[350] *Ibidem*, p. 25.
[351] See: Joseph Kosuth, "1975", *The Fox*, vol. 1, 2 (1975), pp. 86-96.
[352] Osborne, "Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy", p. 50.

Osborne does not use the normal terminology that contrasts *analytical* conceptual art to *synthetic* conceptual art. Instead of that, he refers to *inclusive* / *weak* conceptualists (providing Sol LeWitt as an example) and *exclusive* / *strong* conceptualists (providing Kosuth or the British collective Art & Language as examples). Judging by the examples of artists, this distinction is not very different from what is usual. But, on the other hand, the inclusion/exclusion duality suggests another type of relationship between the two "conceptualisms" that were distinguished. Rather than a connection by juxtaposition – the simplest way of defining a frontier – Osborne defines a restricted (or strong) scope *inside* a broader (or weak) scope. The image that is brought across is that of a general, wide-ranging territory, that includes *in its interior* a smaller, restricted nucleus.

Osborne speaks of another, more distanced and more critical distinction, in addition to this distinction between *inclusive* and *exclusive* conceptual art, in relation to the disputes for the prerogatives of the definition of "conceptual art" and its relationship with philosophy. He argues that the internal conflicts of conceptual art can be observed at two different levels:

> (...) the level at which those advocating an expansive, empirically diverse and historically inclusive use of the term "Conceptual art" confront the champions of narrower, analytically more restricted, and explicitly "philosophical" definitions; and the lower – and often more heated – level at which the latter dispute among themselves about the precise character of such definitions and the meaning and implications of their related practices and inquiries.[353]

According to this line of reasoning, when we say "strong" or "weak", it is assumed that the "strength" is defined by a wall of purism erected around "analytical conceptual art", or in other words, "conceptual art as philosophy". It is within this nucleus that art is purged from empirical and conjunctural constraints and becomes autonomous.

This acceptation of autonomy seems to be established around a paradox. In order to define its "essence", art verges on *another* cultural practice – philosophy. From Osborne's point of view, this is only possible because conceptual art does not adopt just any type of philosophy, but very specifically analytical philosophy. He writes:

> Only a certain kind of philosophy could have played this role: namely, an analytical philosophy which combined the classic culture authority of philosophy, in the updated guise of a philosophical scientism (logical-linguistic analysis) with a purely second-order or meta-critical conception of its epistemological status. For only a meta-critical conception of philosophy allows for the *recording* of "art" as "philosophy" while leaving its artistic status intact; rather than, like Hegel (or Danto), presenting them as competing modes of representation and hence conceiving of Conceptual art as the *end of art*, to the precise extent to which it involves art becoming philosophical.[354]

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[353] *Ibidem*, p. 48-49.
[354] *Ibidem*, p. 50.

Besides supplying subject matter (the philosophical ideas themselves), analytical philosophy functions as an operating model for the self-reflexive, or meta-critical task. In this way, art doesn't illustrate the philosophy, but takes it as an operative reference for the transformation of its own practices. Under these circumstances, a double dilemma is created around analytical or exclusive conceptual art.

(1) From the perspective of philosophical *input*, a problem is raised as to the integrity/dilution of philosophy within the scope of the artistic. As Osborne puts it,

> (...) on the one hand, philosophy functions within the artistic field as a specific form of artistic or critical *material* or productive *resource* for a practice the logic of which is supposedly autonomous or immanently artistic. On the other hand, philosophy retains its own immanent criteria of intellectual adequacy as itself a relatively autonomous cultural practice. That is, one may judge the adequacy of the philosophical ideas in play in the art world both "strictly philosophically" and from the standpoint of their contribution to the transformation of artistic practices[355]. The idea of Conceptual art, in the exclusive or strong sense, is the *regulative fantasy* that these two sets of criteria might become one. The practice of strong Conceptualism was the experimental investigation – the concrete elaboration through practice – of the constitutive ambiguity produced by this founding double-coding.[356]

(2) In as far as concerns art transformed by/into philosophy, within it philosophy does not just acquire the status of a factor for the valuation of artistic practice, but also acquires the status of insignia of the very "essence" of art. This is what the paradox comes down to: conceptual art designated as "analytical", "exclusive", "strong/powerful" or "autonomous" stands out from the others due to its closeness to philosophy. The paradox becomes particularly apparent if this identification with philosophy is taken to its final conclusion: to obtain an artwork it would suffice to give the status of "artwork" to a philosophical text. Terry Atkinson examines this problem with some irony when, in the editorial of the first issue of the magazine *Art-Language*, he places the possibility that the actual editorial, itself an attempt to clarify certain aspects of what "conceptual art" is, could be taken as a "conceptual art" work in its own right.

I believe that this is where the limit lies when art, in seeking its own essence, ceases to be art. It becomes theory of art – which is not the same thing as art. Inverting the sense of Reinhardt's words and using them to argue something different, I could say: "Art is art-as-art and everything else is everything else. Art as art is nothing but art. Art is not what is not art."

The self-reflexivity of art dilutes the frontier between practice and theory – that is the condition of self-reflexivity. But it does not transform practice into theory. *Conceptual art dislocates prerogatives of*

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[355] With regard to the issue of the integrity of philosophy when dislocated to the scope of conceptual art, I would like to point out an example which is not an artistic production but a philosophical production: the recently published anthology *Philosophy and Conceptual Art*, edited by Peter Goldie and Elisabeth Schellekens. These texts are generally about conceptual art although their authors are philosophers. In the book it is clear that conceptual art tends not to be discussed in terms of its own specificity. Instead, that specificity is put at the service of a discussion around issues raised by philosophy of art which is, at least in part, external to it. In this situation, conceptual art does not *generate* a matrix for analysis – it is *put into* a matrix of analysis. Perhaps in order to emphasise this fact, the word "philosophy" precedes "conceptual art" in the title of the book, as opposed to what happens in Osborne's essay I am using as reference. Goldie & Schellekens (eds.), *Philosophy and Conceptual Art*, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

[356] Osborne, "Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy", p. 50.

"theorisation about art" to within artistic practice, but the dislocation in itself has meaning and observes a transformative function on that which is dislocated. If there is no transformation, there is no art. If Atkinson had not introduced into his preface the ironic possibility of it being viewed as art, that possibility would not even have been placed. If it could be seen as art, it would no longer be a preface and would become an artwork in the form of a preface.

Before referring to the second paradox of autonomy as seen by Kosuth, I would like to make a final comment about the *exclusive* nature of "conceptual art as philosophy". If it is a fact that art is self-reflexive to the extent it has implications on a theoretical dimension, it is also essential to note that philosophy has universalist purposes – as universalist as to propose definitions for "art" – that merely characterise the theoretic reach of *certain* conceptual artistic practices. In contrast to the works and manifests of Kosuth, the self-reflexive scope of many works of many other conceptual artists relate to more partial, or merely conjunctural, aspects, often with a mainly empirical dimension, that are difficult to identify with the great "common denominators" sought after by philosophy. Not all conceptual works focus on theoretical foundations. Art can be evaluated according to its multiple aspects: epistemological, anthropological, sociological, etc.

In summary, Piper states that:

> If we have to be concerned with one particular concept to be a conceptualist, something's gone badly wrong![357]

This statement could serve to introduce the theme of the next sub-chapter; and the same can be said of the second paradox of autonomy that I am going to mention.

Since, for Kosuth, an artwork defines "art" by presenting itself as a definition of art, that work results from a naming process. The artist states "This is art" and the entity to which that statement refers becomes art. The meaning of the work – a definition of art – is built from the decision of the artist to consider that entity as art. Readymades are a paradigmatic example of this type of procedure.

As Osborne points out, this type of procedure only acquires full significance to the extent that it is made valid by a determined artistic context[358]. If the entity in question (or any indication of its existence) is not inserted into the artistic context or, if its author has not acquired the status of "artist", it does not acquire the status of "art". An unsigned Van Gogh painting found in the larder of a common house would be given the status of artwork. Outside an artistic context and without any signs (even if only historiographical) of who its author is, a readymade would be unrecognisable as artwork.

There is nothing "analytical" about artistic contexts. They are phenomena of a social order. The model of autonomy advocated by Kosuth depends on the type of empirical phenomena which, from his

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[357] *Ibidem*, p. 56.
[358] *Ibidem*, pp. 59-60.

point of view, should be excluded from art. No art is quite as dependent on art institutions as the art which Kosuth argues is true art, purged of all empirical aspects.

The theme of art institutions shall be developed to a certain degree in the next sub-chapter.

(autonomous art *versus*) the conjuncture of artistic practices

The paradigm opposite to that of "art as an absolute definition of art" is that of "art as a conjunctural practice", as a practice with a social and, to that extent, political dimension.

This distinction can be illustrated by comparing and contrasting the work of different artists. Kosuth and Haacke are paradigms of these two thematic opposites. But in addition to the specificity of the individual trajectory of each artist, this distinction also marks, diachronically, the historical development of conceptual art. Throughout its existence during approximately a year, conceptual art became politicised. As Terry Smith, a member of Art & Language, stated, there was a departure from reflection around the concept of "art", shifting towards reflection about the social framework of artistic practice:

> Terry Smith: (...) Right from the mid-1960s, the driving template, if you like, was to work on the concept of art, to test the possibilities for art practices which would be metadiscursive, and to use languages of various kinds to that end. (...). In the early 1970s, however, things shifted. Analytical work continued, but it became also *synthetic* in the sense that the practice was expanded to become an inquiry into subjects and experiences which were much broader than art and its languages, and, of course, into theories for thinking, for speaking, these subjects and experiences. This is an obvious impact of the social movements of the 1960s. Examples of this shift would be Hans Haacke, obviously.[359]
>
> (...)
>
> The shift is that the work became conversations not only about the concept of art, and about the conditions for interrogating it, but about the art world, about political change and its impact on our practice.[360]

In order to examine this *engagée* facet of conceptual art, I propose to adopt a strategy similar to what I used for analytical conceptual art and, therefore, to explore the *limits* of an artwork's political dimension. For this purpose, I propose to address three different levels of what I believe to be the political dimension of art: (1) politics as the theme of the artwork; (2) politics of the artistic means; and (3) politics of defining the factors of valuation of the artwork.

A work can have a political *theme*. In its long history of association to power and counter-power, artistic practice often originates works with declaredly political content. Under these circumstances, politics is something external to art, and regarding which art acts merely as a vehicle of communication. What gives the work its status as art is not its political content, but the artistic quality with which that content is communicated. The mere instrumentalisation of resources common to art, namely visual resources, in order to communicate ideological contents does not originate art but propaganda. With regard to conceptual art with political content, but applicable to art in general, Charles Harrison, a member of the group Art & Language, writes:

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[359] Kelly & Smith, "A Conversation about Conceptual Art", pp. 450-451.
[360] *Ibidem*, p. 454.

> Tendentiousness normally entails a sacrifice of depth and complexity for the sake of transparency and immediacy. The point is not that the pursuit of significant formal or intentional identity necessarily involves submission to some universal aesthetic value, nor that art has to be seen to absolutize or to dehistoricize the contingent (or the "political"). The point is rather that unless the given contingent material is such as to be transformable by the artistic system, it is probably better treated in some other practical sphere; while if the supposed artistic system is such as to impose no limits upon the admission of the contingent or the political, it is probably not worth considering as art.[361]

This basic condition aside, regarding the political contents of art in general, another condition is raised regarding the specificity of conceptual art. More specifically, a problem is raised regarding the relationship between self-reflexivity and political contents. Seeing that self-reflexivity is a distinctive factor of the "conceptual art" category, works of conceptual art do not address themes that are external to art such as, for example, politics. At least by definition they don't. This does not mean that some works of conceptual art cannot have ideological meanings, sometimes quite evident. A work in which this occurs has already been mentioned here: *Inserções em Circuitos Ideológicos: Projeto Coca-Cola*, a work by Cildo Meireles from 1970 [143]. The inscription "yankees, go home!" that the artist adds to *Cola-Cola* bottles before returning them to commercial circulation is in fact an eloquent example of the use of an artistic object to convey an ideological message. However, it is not its ideological content that makes this work a "work of conceptual art". It is because of its implications in terms of conception, production and reception of the artwork *Inserções em Circuitos Ideológicos* can be considered a work of conceptual art.

In spite of this assumption, works of conceptual art can have a theme – in the traditional sense of the word. They can serve as a vehicle of communication for a content exterior to its condition as an artwork but, in that case, the work will only have a self-reflexive dimension if that theme is an aspect of the artistic practice itself. In conceptual works, sometimes a *representation* model is adopted which is actually quite close to so-called figurative art (the objectivity normally leads the representation to a register of documental representation), but the self-reflexive function is achieved to the extent that the thing represented mirrors the artistic practice itself. It can mirror, namely, political aspects of artistic practice. It is that possibility that I will refer to next.

An artwork can have the political mechanisms subjacent to the artistic world as its theme. The artistic category designated as "institutional critique" is the clearest example of that possibility[362]. This is a category that includes works that are critical in relation to the operation of institutions on which valuation and dissemination of art depend. Among the more administrative and more generally civilisational aspects, institutional critique can be aimed at subjects such as: the role played by museums and galleries, the respectability of power players in the artistic world, the financial interests involved in the

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[361] Charles Harrison, "Conceptual Art and Critical Judgement", in Alberro & Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art*, pp. 543-544.
[362] Regarding institutional critique see: John C. Welchman (ed.), *Institutional Critique and After*, Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2006; Alexander Alberro & Blake Stimson (eds.), *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings*, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 2009.

art market and the benefits it receives, quality of life and status of the artist, the personal agendas of critics or editors of the specialist press, etc. – the type of phenomena that determine the "field" of art, to use the term coined by Pierre Bourdieu[363]. The purpose of institutional critique is to denounce. Everything which is not duly taken into account becomes manifest – whether the questionable virtue of established values, or any operational vices that are kept more or less out of sight regarding the visibility of works. (In later developments, some themes related to the day-to-day of the artists, such as their ethnic background and gender, move progressively from the scope of institutional critique to the scope of the politics of identity.)

Hans Haacke is the artist most often associated to politically critical conceptual art and institutional critique. He became generally interested in *systems* – works that are themselves systems, with a stability that results from a balance of strength under permanent transformation. The *Condensation Cube*, from 1963-65, has already been mentioned here, but there are other works, such as these two examples, both dependent on the movement of air:

- *Blue Sail*, from 1964: an extremely light piece of cloth which, fixed by its edges to practically invisible strings, flutter in the centre of a room, blown by a fan [126];
- *Sky Line*, from 1967: a great number of white helium balloons attached to a long nylon line, which are left billowing in the wind in *Central Park*, in two events – *Kinetic Environment I* and *II* – respectively on 23rd July and 29th October [127].

After these experiments with inorganic matter, Haacke also uses living matter, namely plants and animals, which themselves determine the evolution of the system that constitutes the work. Most relevant are:

- *Grass Grows*, from 1969: a small elevation created with earth on the pavement of a room, from which grass grows progressively throughout the duration of the exhibition [128];
- *Norbert*[364]*: "All Systems Go"*, from 1970-71: a parrot stuck in a cage repeating the phrase he was taught "All systems go." [129].

It is in this scope of research of "artwork as a system" that Haacke reaches the theme of "art as system". He is interested specifically in the agents, institutional or anonymous, implied in the production, valuation and reception of art, or, taking into account a wider context, those implied in cultural production in general. He conceives, for example, three works that I have already mentioned:

- *Gallery-Visitor's Profile*, between 1969 and 1973 [144];
- *MoMA Poll*, from 1970 [146];
- *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of 1 May 1971* [147].

Also with regard to these works, the issue of the limits between art and manifest may be raised. I believe that the issue is not very different. Political contents, even if related to the world of art, in themselves do not

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[363] Regarding the concept of "field" see: Pierre Bourdieu, *O Poder Simbólico*, transl. Fernando Tomaz, Lisboa: Difel, 1989.

[364] "Norbert" – the bird's name – is an ironic reference to the mathematician Norbert Wiener, who is considered the "father" of cybernetics.

need art except as a vehicle of communication. Only to the extent that those thematic self-reflexive contents contribute towards obtaining a work that transcends them in their discoursive purpose, can they be admitted in the scope of what is designated as "art". Despite the self-reflexivity, Haacke is not, therefore, an artist as a result of the critique he produces. For example, the book he writes with Pierre Bourdieu *Libre Échange* (Free Exchange)[365], in which he discusses with the sociologist about the field of art, is not art. In the 1970s, Haacke establishes his artistic practices in a territory that can be considered institutional critique, but this also corresponds to the result of research into the nature of the artwork in itself, where contents are inseparable from the condition of the work as an "artwork". When, in 1974, Haacke states his intention to "(...) examine the economic and political bases of institutions, individuals and groups who share the control of cultural power", he adds that he intends to do so *artistically*:

> Strategies might be developed for performing this task in ways that its manifestation are liable to be considered "works of art" in their own right (...) a portrait of their own structure (...).[366]

Here, "own right" designates the factor of autonomy of the work as art in relation to the discourse it conveys. Haacke also tackles this issue in the book with Bourdieu, making reference to the classic duality "form/content". With reference to art in general and his work in particular, Haacke clarifies, during a conversation:

> HH: (...) There is always a certain tension between those who are interested first and foremost in what is "told" and those who privilege style. Neither manage to understand and appreciate the artwork according to its fair value. The "forms" speak and the "subject" fits into the "forms". The set is inevitably impregnated with ideological significations. It is no different to what happens in my work. There are those who are attracted by the subject and by the information...
> PB: The message.
> HH: ...explicit or implicit. (...)[367]

Haacke moves away from any simplistic vision of art's capacity to be ideological, even in circumstances as particular as jointly writing a text with a Marxist sociologist. Haacke is an artist who, acknowlegedly, manages to produce ideological critique without ceasing to produce, above all, *art*. Haacke is an "artist who approaches politics", and not a "politician who approaches art", as demonstrated by his career – to which I refer only very briefly here.

This fact should not be confused with another, also repeatedly mentioned with regard to the particular position Haacke occupies as an artist – the fact that Haacke produces his critique from within the actual

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[365] Bourdieu & Haacke, *Libre Éxchange*.
[366] Hans Haacke, *All the "Art" that's Fit to Show*, in: Alberro & Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art*, p. 303.
[367] Bourdieu & Haacke, *Libre Éxchange*, p. 92 [HH: (...) Il y a toujours une tension entre ceux qui s'intéressent avant tout à ce qui est "raconté" et ceux qui privilégient la manière. Ni les uns ni les autres ne peuvent comprendre et apprécier l'œuvre d'art à sa juste valeur. Les "formes" parlent et le "sujet" s'inscrit dans les "formes". L'ensemble est inévitablement imprégné de significations idéologiques. Ce n'est pas différent dans mon travail. Il y a ceux qui sont attirés par le sujet e les informations... PB: Le message. HH: ...explicite ou implicite. (...)].

system he criticises. They are different things. One thing is to situate institutional critique with regard to the ambiguous frontier between "ideological art" (that lies within an artistic realm) and "art ideology" (that lies within the sociological realm). This is a task in which it is necessary to take the concept of "art" as a reference. Another thing entirely is the limit that Haacke also explores, between "being part of the system" and "placing oneself outside the system".

For the work of any artist to acquire the status of "art", it has to be recognised as art within the context of the artistic system, and Haacke is not unaware of that fact. Instead, he explores the limit between "being accepted by the system" and "not being accepted by the system". On the one hand, Haacke is an artist because the system recognises him as such. His work acquires not only status but visibility, because it is exposed, disclosed and published by the institutions and protagonists of the system. On the other hand, Haacke is an agent who scathingly denounces the vices of the artistic system – a mission in which he takes their acceptableness to the limit. He places himself meticulously on the borderline between belonging and attacking, between being appreciated and being insubordinate. He operates according to a strategy of *subversion*. Taking advantage of the fact that (1) his denunciations are considered pertinent by some and (2) the system has no interest in playing a repressive role on an artist with public visibility, Haacke explores the limits of to what point institutions accept being criticised. He places himself, in terms of institutions, in a position of equilibrium – an equilibrium that can be upset. That is what happens in 1971, when Haacke sees one of his exhibitions at the Guggenheim museum cancelled by Thomas M. Messer, director of the museum. Two works were in question here, one of which precisely *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of 1 May 1971*. In this case, it is very curious that that the argument invoked by Messer is that Haacke is not producing art, but photojournalism. He raises a question related to the artistic status of the work when, in truth, what is in question here is the contents it conveys.

The refusal of Haacke's work by the Guggenheim is an exceptional episode that was brought about by the coincidence between the artist's prestige and audacity. Sometimes, however, the critique is not sufficiently cutting to constitute a threat and is absorbed by the institution, or by the system in general, which even manages to demonstrate its "openness". Institutionalised power becomes stronger when it is able to absorb the counter-power. In these cases, the critique ends up contributing to what it intends to oppose. It operates only as a simulacrum of the destructive spirit of the historical avant-gardes of the start of the 20th Century.

I believe that it is possible to define the field in which institutional critique is established by looking simultaneously at the two dualities I have just mentioned – art / ideology and interior / exterior of the system. The specific condition of *artist* (and not of *ideologist*) as someone who produces institutional critique works so that, on the one hand, "headroom" is created as well as immunity that allows institutional messages to be sent and, on the other, those messages do not reach the scope of the concrete and remain fairly external to the true development of the facts.

A work of art can be political in the manner that it is fits into the public sphere. That is what happens in works I examined in chapter I-1, with regard to the "work as an entity". I am making reference to works whose materiality is reduced to a purely instrumental condition, precisely to the extent that *the manner in which they are introduced into the public sphere* is exploited. By diversifying the media used for communicating the work, art reaches the public in a less institutionalised manner than its exhibition in museums or galleries (and less monumentalist than urban statues). It is with this purpose that, as I mentioned, several artists resort to banal forms of communication such as newspapers, magazines, televisions, advertising billboards in public spaces, interior or exterior walls, mail, telegrams, books, catalogues, photocopies, etc. Examples of this are Weiner's declarations, the different advertisement-works by Kosuth or, to evoke the most paradigmatic example, the work by Cildo Meireles *Inserções em Circuitos Ideológicos: Projeto Coca-Cola* (Insertions into Ideological Circuits: The Coca-Cola Project).

A work of art can aim at the assumptions underlying what is considered the *distinctive* quality of art – which is also political. In this case, the work doesn't have a "theme" – a theme that is external to it – and it is its own characteristics that acquire political value, whereby "politics" is understood as the framework of values and internal protocols within the scope of art that determine what art, or "good art", is. A determined work acquires political relevance to the extent that, in its contingency, it sort of "leaps forwards" in relation to the scope of values that contextualises it, either contradicting or ignoring it. A deviation takes place. The operative system of art is not taken as an assumption but, instead, as the subject matter of a radically free invention.

On the one hand, the exploration of operative means makes the artwork significant from a self-reflexive perspective, and also from a poetic perspective. (It is due to its fundamentally poetic dimension that the models of consumption of art invented by conceptual artists possess a validity that transcends the revolutionary fervour that, at the time, might have justified them.) On the other hand, the work is placed at a point of equilibrium between "being recognised as art" and "not corresponding to the canons of art" in which resides its political sense (a situation in a certain manner similar to the ambiguity "inside / outside the system" which characterises institutional critique). The creative procedures carried out by the artist, the material condition of the work, its qualities as a *formal* signifier entity, the type of relationship that the receiver establishes with the work – all these are examples of the empirical aspects inevitably implied in the fact that "a work is produced and put into contact with the public" which, in conceptual art, constitute the creative and significant substance of the work.

The phenomena of "loss of the work's objecthood" described in the first chapter of this dissertation can be understood from that perspective. To these, another more general phenomenon can be added, particularly illustrative of the departure from instituted operative assumptions as well as particularly important: the undifferentiated use of the different instrumental resources that are traditionally associated to

the different "arts". Drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, film, audio recording, etc. are used according to the intentions of each work, used with the same freedom as texts, tables, diagrams, actions carried out by the artists, their body, computing and cybernetics, the environment, or other resources without artistic status.

This *political* approach to the artwork reveals a similarity with the territory of *autonomy* claimed by the practices of analytical conceptual art: both have the definition of "art" at their core, as well as the set of factors of valuation of the work implied in that definition. In both, the foundation of the work resides in the act of presenting it as art. This is where the departure from the canons resides and, consequently, this is where its political relevance comes from.

However, there is a fundamental difference between these two paths.

As I mentioned, Kosuth seeks to propose a definition of "art" through a theoretical and universalist means (and historiographically well grounded) and, also, to produce works that are, themselves, that definition. For Kosuth, Duchamp's readymades are examples of this perspective. In "Art after Philosophy" he writes

> "Being an artist now means to question the nature of art (...)[368]."(...) The function of art, as a question, was first raised by Marcel Duchamp (...) The event that made conceivable the realization that it was possible to 'speak another language' and still make sense in art was Marcel Duchamp's first unassisted readymade. (...) Artists question the nature of art by presenting new propositions as to art's nature.[369]

This excerpt clearly reveals the Kosuth's bias towards the readymade. In order to elect the readymade as the privileged predecessor of "analytical conceptual art", Kosuth ignores its implications in as far as concerns the values and protocols of artistic practice. If the readymade can be seen as a work that he re-evaluates the definition of "art" at its most abstract level, it is also inevitable to consider that, at the same time, it re-evaluates mechanisms for conception, production and institutional recognition of the work of art, or in other words, art as an operative system.

Another aspect that can be taken into account from this text is the nature of what is understood as the "definition of art". It admits different acceptations. In agreement with Roberts's perspective[370], I would like to identify a difference between Duchamp's questioning attitudes in relation to the nature of what art is (the works of Duchamp ask "Is this art?") and, in contrast, Kosuth's affirmative attitude (Kosuth's works are proposals in that they assure "This is art."). I bring up that distinction here because I believe that I can establish a similar distinction between the exploration of the nature of art promoted by Kosuth and what results from the empirical exploration of art's operativity, which I have been attempting to define here. To the extent that Kosuth considers artworks to be proposals for the definition of art, even more than stating

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[368] Kosuth quotes a text of his from 1968.
[369] Kosuth, "Art after Philosophy", p. 18.
[370] Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form*, p. 316.

"this is art", a work affirms with regard to itself "art is this". All Kosuth's exclusivist arguments with regard to what "conceptual art" is point in that direction. On the other hand, when procedures that are part of the operative system of art are reinvented, (1) one states "this can be art" and not "art is this" and (2) the definition of "art" is a *consequence*, and not an *objective*, of speculation carried out through artistic practice. The work is not a definition of "art", but merely material that can contribute to the discussion around that definition. An artwork is eminently speculative and promotes the world of possibilities of what art can be.

I believe that the arguments I have just proposed can be summarised in the statement that artistic practices speculate as to what an artwork can be – and the values inherent to what is conceived as "quality of art" – are, for that reason only, political. All experiments on the operativity of art, from the most radically analytical to the most obviously ideological forms of conceptual art, are political because of the deviations they produce. The deviation in relation to the values and protocols instituted in art has a political dimension that is common to all conceptual art.

conceptual art and administrative procedures

The self-reflexivity of conceptual art can be viewed not only as a stage in the evolution of the avant-gardes of so-called "visual arts" – a stage of radical questioning of the bases of artistic practices – but also as a phenomenon related to its historical context and, above all, to the new things that were changing civilisation at that time. Conceptual art does not just reflect upon itself. It reflects on its own condition in view of a cultural context ("cultural" in the broadest sense) that is under transformation and in which it produces meanings.

One of the most highly rated texts addressing the cultural meaning of conceptual art is by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, published in 1989 under the title "From the Aesthetic of Administration to Institutional Critique (Some Aspects of Conceptual Art 1962-1969)"[371]. The text is divided into five parts, the first four each dedicated to a different artist that Buchloh considers conceptual, and the last to a set of phenomena grouped under the title "A Tale of Many Squares". The order according to which Buchloh organises the different cases suggests a historical development of conceptual art that extends, as the title indicates, "from the aesthetic of administration to institutional critique".

The argument propounded by Buchloh arises from the fact that, in the context of conceptual art, but also in the context of Duchamp's readymades, any object may be raised to the status of "artwork" through an *administrative* initiative. He explains, with regard to a work by Robert Morris that includes a statement certified by a public notary:

> In *Document (Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal)*, Morris took the literal negation of the visual further and clarified that the Readymade after Duchamp is not just a neutral analytic proposition (in the manner of an underlying statement such as "This is a work of art"), but that with and after the Readymade, the aesthetic construct becomes ultimately the subject of a legal definition and the result of institutional validation.[372]

Therefore, the "legal definition" or the "institutional validation" become the factors on which the status of the artwork depends, substituting the formal qualities of the work which had previously ensured that status. According to Buchloh, this aspect of conceptual art is related to a broad social – or cultural – phenomenon. Continuing to view the readymade as a predecessor, Buchloh explains:

> Just as the Readymade had negated not only figurative representation, authenticity, authorship and had introduced repetition and the series (i.e. the law of industrial production) to replace the studio aesthetic of the handcraft original, Conceptual Art now dislocated even the image of the mass produced object and its aestheticized forms in Pop Art, and replaced an aesthetic of a

[371] Buchloh, "From the Aesthetic of Administration to Institutional Critique, pp. 41-53.
[372] *Ibidem*, p. 44.

> world of industrial production and consumption with an aesthetic of administrative and legal organization and institutional validation.[373]

However, the connection between conceptual art and this phenomenon that so deeply influenced the cultural context where it evolved is not unequivocal. It varies from artist to artist. In order to examine how this cultural transformation is reflected in the work of different artists, Buchloh adopts a historiographical perspective and describes an evolution which goes, as the title indicates, "from the aesthetic of administration" to institutional critique. In this sense, he distinguishes between:

- an aesthetic of administration arising within the proto-conceptual context. More specifically, in the section of his essay with the title "A Tale of Many Squares", Buchloh identifies its appearance in works that promote the *objecthood of painting*, whether through "emphasising painting's *opacity*", or "emphasising painting's *transparency*", or even through the "'simple' rotation of the square"[374]. According to the author,

  > These objects (...) demarcate another spectrum of departures towards Conceptual Art, inevitably destabilizing the boundaries of the traditional artistic categories of the studio production by eroding them with modes of industrial production in the manner of Minimalism. But they went further in their critical revision of the discourse of the studio versus the discourse of production/consumption, and by ultimately dismantling both, along with the conventions of visuality inherent in them, they firmly established an aesthetic of administration.[375]

  Therefore, the aesthetic of administration results from overcoming artistic *manufacture* which no longer a standard for the valuation of the work, overcoming *industrial production* (which is no longer a "novelty" with which it is necessary to confront the traditional artistic manufacture) and, in this way, overcoming the opposition that exists between both. The problem of the different modes of artistic production that give birth to the "artwork" object is abandoned; in fact it is no longer an issue. Production occurs freely, whereby a territory is created where even the frontiers between the "arts" are extinguished. Under these circumstances, the artwork is unveiled: firstly, by ostensively displaying its existence as an *object*; then as an object that is hard to classify; and, because it is hard to classify, also exhibiting its need to be *identified* as an "artwork". The work itself does not stand out as an artwork. It needs to be identified as such. And, for this to happen, the assistance of *administrative* aspects is necessary. In other words, it is necessary for certain circumstances or administrative procedures to ensure that it is identified as an "artwork": the fact that it is exhibited at a certain location, the fact that it is recognised by a certain institution or, at the very least, the fact that it is accompanied by the documentation that establishes its status, its authorship, etc.

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[373] *Ibidem*, p. 45.
[374] *Ibidem*, p. 49.
[375] *Ibidem.*

- an aesthetic of administration in which the act of stating "This is a work of art" becomes the exclusive meaning of the work and all the rest is reduced to tautology; in other words, reduced to the absence of meaning. Therefore, the administrative act of stating "This is a work of art" becomes self-sufficient as an artistic intention. As I have mentioned, this is the type of emptying of the work put into practice paradigmatically by Kosuth – the artist Buchloh chooses as the target of his visceral criticism[376], writing:

> In the model of tautology and the accompanying aesthetic of administration, the rights and rationale of a newly established post-war middle class, coming fully into its own in the 1960s, claims its aesthetics identity as well, after its social identity – as one of merely administering labor and production (rather than producing) and of the distribution of commodities – has become apparent and firmly established as the most common and powerful social class of post-war society. It is the class which, as H. G. Helms wrote in his book on Max Stirner, "...deprives itself voluntarily of the rights to intervene within the political decision making process in order to arrange itself more efficiently with existing political conditions".[377]

Therefore, for Buchloh, the "lack of stance" of the artist converges with the "lack of stance" of the American middle class of the post-war era. Buchloh suggests that the tautology in art is nothing other than the reproduction of ideological apathy of that middle class. He attacks it because of its innocuousness, quoting Roland Barthes, and because of its connivance with the "show society", quoting Guy Debord. However, as if giving him the benefit of doubt, Buchloh concludes by wondering:

> It still remains open for discussion to what extent Conceptual Art of a certain type shares these conditions, or even enacts and implements them in the sphere of the aesthetic – henceforth perhaps its proximity and success within a world of advertisement strategists – or to what extent it merely inscribes itself into the inescapable logic of a totally administered world, as Adorno's notorious term identified it.[378]

- a critical attitude according to which the work is no longer subject to the requirement of being an object and, instead, is directly fitted into the context to which it belongs. That is what happens in the squares that Weiner removes from the surface of a wall (the support of a painting) or from a rug on the floor (a sculpture's support). With regard to these two works, Buchloh observes that

> (...) neither of these surfaces could be considered in any way independent from its institutional location, since the physical inscription into each particular surface inevitably generates contextual and contiguous readings dependent upon

[376] Buchloh's attack on the intellectual positioning claimed by Kosuth in "Art after Philosophy" is violent. A page was added to the catalogue in which Buchloh published his original text, glued after being printed, where Kosuth exercises his "right of reply" and, also violently, he denies Buchloh's legitimacy as a theorist and a historian. Joseph Kosuth, "Joseph Kosuth responds to Benjamin Buchloh", in Claude Gintz, Juliette Laffon & Angeline Scherf (eds.), *L'Art Conceptuel*, p. 54.
[377] Buchloh, "From the Aesthetic of Administration to Institutional Critique", p. 48.
[378] *Ibidem.*

> the institutional conventions and the particular use of those surfaces. (...) Weiner's two squares are now physically integrated with *both* the support surfaces and their institutional definition.[379]

- the actual institutional critique that Buchloh considers the epitome of expression of his critical actions initiated by Weiner and which he identifies in the work produced in 1966 by Marcel Broodthaers, Daniel Buren and Hans Haacke. I have already portrayed this trend of conceptual art using the work of Haacke as an example. And I have also pointed out its limitations as counter-power. But it is important to note that, in order to ask this final question, Buchloh uses as his main reference the most fundamental type of communication available in the capitalist system – publicity. He observes, referring specifically to the effects of the works of some artists in France,

> (...) that the critical annihilation of cultural conventions itself immediately acquired the conditions of spectacle culture, that the insistence on artistic anonymity and the demolition of authorship produced instant brand names and identifiable products, and that the campaign to critique conventions of visuality with textual interventions, billboard signs, anonymous handouts, and pamphlets would inevitably follow the pre-established mechanisms of advertising and product campaigns.[380]

The two thematic limits that I enunciated earlier for the self-reflexivity of conceptual art – autonomous art *versus* political art – are to a large extent similar to those defined by Buchloh within the scope of the aesthetic of administration. Buchloh's starting point is the fact that an artwork, in order to be recognised as such, depends on institutional factors. Based on this, he states, on one hand, (1) the way that leads to the possibility of an autonomous art based on tautology, that is, an art in which the emptying of the idea is taken to the point where it is no more than a pure expression of its own condition as an "artwork" (Buchloh considers it a degenerate evolution of the aesthetic of administration in that it relinquishes assuming any sort of ideological stance, in favour of innocuousness) and, on the other hand, (2) the road of progressive politicisation of conceptual art which goes from an aesthetic of administration to institutional critique.

I have already mentioned these aspects. Now, I propose to consider the culturalist focus of Buchloh's essay – to consider the relation that Buchloh establishes between conceptual art and the cultural phenomena that contextualise it or, more specifically, to consider which phenomena he elects as defining of that context.

In general terms, Buchloh uses tertiarisation and the world of trade as his point of reference. Tertiarisation is the universe of the *administrative* – the universe in which things become absent and are manipulated in an abstract manner, by means of verbal language (documents), based on laws and rules (deliberative or strategic contents) and into quantitative logics (expressed in tables and charts). This is the universe that communicates with the public sphere mainly through advertising, whose social insertion

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[379] *Ibidem*, p. 50.
[380] *Ibidem*, p. 52.

strategies are as varied as the actual possibilities of communication, using media such as public spaces (posters, billboards, neon signs, etc.), and mass publications (newspapers and magazines) or the mass media (television and radio). All of this has indeed a great deal to do with conceptual art. However, despite the clear connection between them, Buchloh starts off from very specific assumptions with regard to:

- which part of the *administrative* universe can be reflected by works of conceptual art;
- what can be considered *administrative* in conceptual art;

It is these two assumptions that I shall discuss next. I shall start by discussing the scope of the "administrative", arguing that it should be open to the detriment of more restrictive visions that associate it merely to corporate and institutional logic that govern social practices. Then, distinguishing the representation of the administrative universe from the use of administrative strategies within the scope of artistic practice itself (regarding which I shall use Benjamin as the reference), I will argue that what characterises all conceptual art is the administrative nature of the procedures that give birth to the work.

Firstly, the phenomena that are reflected by what Buchloh calls "an aesthetic of administrative and legal organisation and institutional validation", or "an aesthetic of administrative (as opposed to productive) work and production and of distribution of merchandise", can be observed from a broader perspective – less focused on institutions and corporations[381]; or, in as far as specifically concerns the artwork, less focused "[on] their mercantile status or [on] their form of distribution"[382]. These are phenomena which, regardless of whether they are at the service of corporate dynamics, find meaning in themselves as generically *civilisational* achievements. In addition to being a potential resource for institutions and corporations, they are also used by other social agents, or possess a cultural importance that goes beyond their use in that specific context.

Before looking at the broader picture suggested by these phenomena, I would like to consider them from Michael Corris' perspective when he asks, with regard to conceptual art:

> What was art's response to a set of technocratic theories, ideologies, and new structures of intellectual production (...) that seemed to be committed collectively to the transformation of people into objects of "technical and administrative measures"?" [Adorno's expression]?"[383]

This form of addressing the problem presents an epistemological dimension that Buchloh's technocentric perspective does not possess. Corris is interested in new "administrative" social practices as a reference for

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[381] Also from an eminently socio-economic viewpoint, Robert Hobbs offers a perspective different to Buchloh's (and centred on the North-American context). He observes that North-American conceptual art develops during the "affluent society". This expression is taken from the title of the well-known book by John Kenneth Galbraith which describes the appearance of a new social class in the US – a class greater in number than the "elites" existing until then, for whom economic subsistence was no longer an issue and was dedicated to intellectual satisfaction and the cultivation of taste. Robert Hobbs, "Affluence, Taste, and the Brokering of Knowledge: Notes on the Social Context of Early Conceptual Art", in Michael Corris (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, pp. 200-222.

[382] Buchloh, "From the Aesthetic of Administration to Institutional Critique", p. 41.

[383] Michael Corris, "Recording Information, Knowledge, and Technology", in Corris (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, p. 190.

conceptual art, but includes them in a larger framework that encompasses "structures of *intellectual production*".

Corris does not actually get to answer his own question. It serves to introduce one of the chapters of the book *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth, and Practice* – a chapter called "Recording Information, Knowledge, and Technology". It is an eloquent title in as far as concerns the range of general social aspects examined in the different texts compiled by Corris – the aspects which I intend to use here as a reference point. The recording of information, the universe of knowledge and, principally, the manner in which both are revolutionised by technology constitute crucial factors, not only to contextualise administrative procedures, but also to understand the culture of the 1960s. In their interaction, they can be considered the basis of operative territories (such as the administrative) where things – the actual things – disappear in favour of their abstract manipulation.

In this sense, conceptual art can be seen as the place where art too is faced with the possibility of an absence of things and with the presence of only a reference to those things. Seen from this perspective, the set of phenomena that is sometimes designated with the term "dematerialization" and has already been examined in chapter I-1 of this dissertation acquires a clear cultural dimension. But other more concrete phenomena can be taken as a reference, which are more directly related to the theme examined here. It is the case of two of the most relevant exhibitions in the development of the movement designated as "conceptual art":

- *Information*[384], organised by Kynaston McShine and on show at the MoMA in New York between the 2nd July and the 20th September 1970, this exhibition brings the works of several artists together, on the theme of "information".
- *Software, Information Technology: Its Meaning for Art*[385] is an exhibition organised by Jack Burnham and opened to the public at first in the Jewish Museum of New York from the 16th September to the 8th November 1970 and then at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington between the 16th December 1970 and the 14th February 1971.

In addition to the aspects of conceptual art that are more related to informative material (ranging from the use of language to documental records), these two exhibitions are known for the introduction of computer technology (data processing and system control) into artistic practices. These are the two exhibitions that Johanna Drucker refers to in one of the articles of Corris' book to illustrate the reflection of the "paradigm of information" in conceptual art – a paradigm this author defines as:

> (...) the theorization of information as both a quantifiable discipline and an idea that has relevance across a broad spectrum of economic and cultural activities. The separation of "ideas" and material forms remains a central feature of information processing

[384] Mcshine, *Information*.
[385] Jack Burnham, *Software, Information Technology: Its Meaning for Art* (exhibition catalogue), New York: Jewish Museum, 1970.

> with its distinctions of quantifiable data, computational operations, program functions, and output devices independent of the means with which the data are input into a digital system.[386]

The foundation of this paradigm is the disjunction between *software* and *hardware*, in other words, between the information in itself (the contents) and the material devices that vehicle the contents or allow them to be manipulated (their operation is independent with regard to those contents). Nowadays, in an age when every type of data can be condensed into combinations of "0" and "1", this paradigm is common. During the 1960s, conceptual art was faced with this at a less advanced stage. The fact that art is confronted with the separation between software and hardware is very significant with regard to the value, not only of materiality, but also of the visual itself. It is not just a matter of recognising the independence between, on the one hand, software in which the enunciation of the work exists and, on the other hand, hardware in which the work can acquire a material existence – a theme I discussed in chapter I-1 of this dissertation. It is also a matter of acknowledging that the work can be observed as a "communication device", regardless of the "contents" that an artwork may convey. Therefore, even more so than materiality, what is in question is *visuality*. The work is subject to scrutiny in its capacity as a *visual* communicative entity.

This explains why situations such as those described below so often occur:

- The work is emptied of content and is presented merely as a device. This is what occurs in works whose content is not visible. At the scale of the object, *Secret Painting* by Art & Language is an example [137]. As I mentioned earlier, this work consists of a canvas painted in black and the information that "The content of this painting is invisible; the character and dimension of the content are to be kept permanently secret, known only to the artist". An example of a larger scale device would be *Closed Gallery Piece* [140 . 141] which Barry produces between 1969 and 1970 and consists of a notice stating that, the gallery is closed during the exact period that an exhibition of his takes place.
- The work is emptied of the type of visual content associated to the tradition of visual arts, in favour of informative modes that are external to that sort of tradition, such as texts, tables, diagrams, etc. The *Index* series installations that the Art & Language collective starts in *Documenta 5*, in 1972 are a paradigmatic example of this, consisting in the compilation of documentary material about art (using modes of systematic compilation which are impossible to grasp) [108].
- The phenomenon of visual emptying of the work is the actual work. The is the case of the works of the *Inert Gas Series* which Robert Barry produces during March and April 1969, and which consist in the release – "from a measured volume to indefinite expansion"[387] – of different inert gases (argon, helium, etc.) [134 . 135].

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[386] Drucker, "The Crux of Conceptualism", p. 251.

[387] *from a measured volume to indefinite expansion* is the subtitle given by Barry to the series.

Therefore, the absence of "things" is not limited merely to the processes which allow their reference and manipulation in a purely abstract manner while they are absent. To make things absent within the scope of artistic production is also a strategy which allows art to question the preponderance of the visual as a defining factor of *visual* arts. "Making absent things visually present" was, *but no longer is*, their prerogative. In this sense, as Drucker writes,

> (...) Conceptual art is recognized to be a key initiator in the dialogue between visual art and visual culture. This relationship was identified as an issue at the time and expressed by Kynaston McShine, the curator of *Information*, as the "ambiguous and ironic position" in which the artist finds himself relative to the flux of contemporary media images. Thus, the institutional alignment between Conceptual art and the information paradigm went to the heart of the challenges that fine art was facing from mass media in entertainment, advertising, and other areas of visual culture.[388]

At this point of the discussion, I would like to return to the distinction I pointed out earlier between, on the one hand, the universe of the *administrative* that works of conceptual art can reflect and, on the other hand, what can be *administrative* in conceptual art.

Up to this point, I have been presenting my thoughts on the former aspect. I argued that, during the 1960s, the phenomenon of administrative logic (corporate, juridical or other) is not closed within itself. It is part of a wide range of phenomena in which the common ground is operative contexts where things are absent, as well as the means that allow operating abstractly with the absent things – the contexts that arise in the "information age". I also argued that, as Drucker says, conceptual art is the territory of confrontation between art and the wide field that is "visual culture". These are the phenomena that one can try to see reflected in the *formal characteristics of* conceptual *artworks*. But this is a quite peculiar attempt. It assumes that works of conceptual art *figure* the universe where these phenomena belong. They represent it somehow. It is starting from this assumption that, for example, Buchloh accuses Kosuth of ideological innocuousness. However, what Buchloh does not consider, even when he analyses a work likes Morris' *Document (Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal)*, is that the administrative aspects can be present in the work not because of "what they represent", but because of "the way they are produced". I believe that, in conceptual art, *the production of works does not fit into the administrative universe merely because of their need for institutional recognition* (which would reduce the concept of the *administrative* merely to the action of cultural production agents) *but, instead, administrative processes can also be found within the scope of artistic production itself, in other words, in the manner that artists operate in order to achieve the work*.

The analysis of the difference between these two scopes of the work's sociocultural implications is not new. It wasn't new at the time of retrospective views such as Buchloh's, nor even in the days of conceptual art. Tertiarisation and the information society were not the first technical innovations associated with a wide social dimension to be brought to the world of art and problematised. The same thing happens,

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[388] Drucker, "The Crux of Conceptualism", p. 252.

evidently, with the technical innovations that arise from industrialisation. With regard to this, Walter Benjamin's analyses are still essential. In 1934, in his text "Der Autor als Produzent" (the Author as Producer), Benjamin writes:

> Rather than asking, "what is the attitude of a work *to* the relations of production of its time?" I would like to ask, "what is its position *in* them? This question directly concerns the function the work has within the literary relations of production of its time. It is concerned, in other words, directly with the literary *technique* of works. [...] In bringing up technique, I have named a concept that makes literary products accessible to an immediately social, and therefore materialist, analysis.[389]

Benjamin refers specifically to writing. But this analysis remains pertinent when applied to any sort of artistic production, and conceptual art in particular. The two questions to which Benjamin refers aptly summarise the difference that exists in any artwork between "what the work represents" and "how the work is produced". When the work *represents* a given technical context – to praise it, to question it or to accuse it – that work accomplishes a mimetic function. The other possibility is that the work is the result of a range of technical procedures which themselves have meaning. The technique is not represented but instead is used. This distinction is essential because both the self-reflexivity with which art is vested and the role that the object can perform in the self-reflexive context depend on it. In this way, two types of self-reflexivity can be enunciated:

- a self-reflexivity that is rooted in the interior of the object, that is, in its representative qualities. Within this scope, two possibilities can be considered. One corresponds to what Buchloh considers: the universe of the "administrative" and of information is *represented* in the work. The other involves increasing self-reflexivity and subjecting the actual act of communicating to scrutiny. Within the universe of information, the artwork is reconsidered as a *communicative entity*. Under these circumstances, the exterior of the work may be considered, but only as a "cultural context" within which the work communicates. This is the type of self-reflexivity subjacent to the definition of conceptual art proposed by Edward A. Shanken – the definition I mentioned when introducing the theme of self-reflexivity. From the perspective of this author, conceptual self-reflexive specifically focuses on "the possibilities of signification in art's multiple contexts. Despite referring generically to "preconditions for how meaning emerges in art", Shanken see them as a linguistic problem, that is, as a problem relating to mechanisms that allow the work to acquire meaning.
- a self-reflexivity that is based on how the "technical" aspects of the work are applied, that is, the nature of the procedures that are carried out in order to achieve the object. This is the perspective about art that John Roberts develops in his book *The Intangibilities of Form* (which I have already referred to). Roberts performs a review of the history of art since the time of the invention of the readymade, focusing on the production techniques used by artists and formulating his argument

[389] Walter Benjamin, "O Autor enquanto Produtor", in: *Sobre Arte, Técnica, Linguagem e Política*, pp. 139-140.

> based on concepts rooted in Marxist theory on labour. More precisely, Roberts analyses the relationship that is established between, on the one hand, what he calls a "general social technique" – technique as general social data, as a resource of non-artistic production under permanent transformation and as an economic and political determining factor – and, on the other hand, the technique used as an operative framework which each artist establishes or adopts in this specifically artistic production.

I am not making this distinction to argue in favour of the existence of different types of conceptual works. I can mention Weiner's declarations as an example of ambivalent work. They can be seen as assuming a position on the process of signification in art; they can be seen as a question radically aimed at the semiotic bases of art, such as: "What types of signs are made available to communicate the artwork?". But, at the same time, to the extent that Weiner admits that the artist can execute the work, that the receptor can execute it and that the work may never be executed at all, the declarations also question the procedures necessary in order to obtain the work. What is at stake is the very definition of "art" as labour: Weiner's declarations are evidently of administrative nature. What they offer is *information* for a possible realisation of the artwork.

But this is not the point of my argument either. I do not believe it is sufficient to state that even works of semiotic incidence can imply procedures of administrative nature. More than that, I believe that *the procedures carried out in order to obtain any single work of conceptual art are always of an administrative nature.*

Conceptual artworks never result from a canonical production process. The departure from modes of production that LeWitt calls expressionist (a departure initiated with Duchamp's readymades) opens up a field of invention around the technical contours to obtain the work. This technique is a significant part of the work, regardless of other aspects present in its content. This occurs even in works such as those of Kosuth – an artist for whom an aspect as empirical as "the ideology subjacent to the modes of production of art" is excluded from the realm of the conceptual. The deviation of productive procedures from their respective canons confers, on any work of conceptual art, a political significance associated with production. The form of conceptual works is always political. Kosuth ends up recognising this in his essay "1975" – the same text in which he described conceptual art as being "(...) the art of the Vietnam war era"[390].

Taking into consideration what has just been said, a new question can be formulated: how do technical aspects become present in the work? This is what I shall attempt to explain in the next and final sub-chapter, while trying to respond at the same time to another question that has not yet been answered: "in what way is this specific operative conjuncture related to the specific cultural context of conceptual art?"

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[390] Kosuth, "1975", p. 139.

"lack of quality" as a strategy and "doing nothing" as a paradigm

The statement that conceptual art is a failed project is recurrent in retrospective analyses. And there are reasons to say this. In a political and cultural context marked by the Vietnam War and the reactions it provokes, by the student protests, and by the proposals of libertarian lifestyles, the ambition of conceptual artists is to escape the institutionalisation of art in museums and galleries, as well as a submission to market principles. Conceptual art is considered, *par excellence*, the counterculture art of the 1960s. The modes of production and disclosure adopted in the artistic context seek, on the one hand, to free creativity from the orthodoxies that constrain it and, on the other hand, render artistic production democratically accessible. In fact, this does not happen. The market and institutions possess a huge ability to absorb the peculiar products of conceptual art and, soon afterwards, categories as orthodox as painting and sculpture return to the limelight, a phenomenon that reaches its peak during the 1980s.

This negative assessment is sometimes concluded with the statement that conceptual art becomes a style – a set of apparent signs that are not only recognisable but are also awarded status. The desired anti-style of conceptual art, the "zero degree" of style as Victor Burgin[391] calls it, therefore ends up established as a style. This diagnosis reduces to innocuousness all the phenomena regarding denial of formal and / or material *status* of the object, described in chapter I-1 of this dissertation and which, originally, sought to assume a political stance in relation to the material definition of the artwork. The forms no longer serve intentions. Both the departure from precepts of the formal definition of the work (patent in the *literal* expression of the idea), and the departure from the actual *objecthood* of the work are reduced to innocuousness. The "forms" which in conceptual art permit the self-reflexive task to unfold – the reflection on the nature and the contingency of what is understood as art – become yet another "brand image" of the market and History, thus undermining the underlying project.

If this problem is diagnosed in the history of conceptual art, another problem may be raised, of similar nature but with a greater historiographical scope, regarding the legitimacy, or the lack thereof, of the appearance of neo-avant-garde (including conceptual art) in the post-war era, recovering certain subversive aspects of the avant-garde movements and Dadaism and the Russian / Soviet avant-gardes in particular. With regard to this, the peremptory position of Peter Bürger should be noted, refusing the legitimacy of the neo-avant-garde. For Bürger, after art as an institution demonstrated its capacity to survive the attacks of the historical avant-gardes,

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[391] Victor Burgin, "Yes, Difference Again: What History Plays the First Time Around as Tragedy, It Repeats as Farse", in Alberro & Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art*, p. 429 [originally published in *Flash Art*, 143, November-December 1988, p. 15].

> The "use for artistic purposes of processes conceived by the avant-garde with an anti-artistic intent" is fallacious and, to that extent, "(...) neo avant-garde institutionalizes *avant-garde as art* and thus negates the original avant-garde intent."[392]

According to this point of view, the schism between "forms" and "intentions" does not result from the development of conceptual art but, instead, is a phenomenon *inherent* to the very appearance of conceptual art.

Criticism such as Bürger's can be rebutted in several ways. For example, the argument propounded by Hal Foster under the title "Who's Afraid of the Neo-Avant-Garde?" could be invoked. Foster establishes a parallel between the life path of an individual and the course of History. More specifically, he evokes the Freudian concept of "deferred action" or "reimpression" (*Nachträglichkeit*), regarding affective experiences, and applies it to the development of his analysis of the avant-gardes. In this way, in contrast to Marx's axiom according to which "What History Plays the First Time Around as Tragedy, It Repeats as Farce"[393], Foster argues that

> (...) historical and neo-avant-gardes are constituted in a similar way, as a continual process of protension and retension, a complex relay of anticipated futures and reconstructed pasts – in short, in a deferred action that throws over any simple scheme of before and after, cause and effect, origin and repetition.[394]

This argument of Foster's is extremely peculiar. In order to accept it, one must first accept that the analogies between individual history and collective history are valid. But this is not how I intend to refute Bürger's criticism. Instead, I will refer to another analysis of the historical role of conceptual art – the analysis put forwards by John Roberts in his article "Conceptual Art and Imageless Truth"[395]. The text is structured by relating the work of different conceptual artists with a common denominator that Roberts identifies with Hegel's notion of "imageless truth". Hegel's main contribution towards an aesthetic, according to Roberts, relates to his disbelief of the universality of images – a universality that is characteristic of the stability of religious values and that was later surpassed by thought and reflection or the pursuit of what Hegel designates as imageless truth. In this way, the road is paved towards an "art of thought". And, since thought reformulates itself continuously, art is faced with the problem of giving shape to what is in the making. Regarding this, Roberts states that

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[392] Bürger, *Teoria da Vanguarda*, pp. 103 and 105.
[393] Interestingly, this same statement is used by Victor Burgin to criticise the transformation of conceptual art into a style, not in the historical scope of conceptual art, but that of the phenomenon derived from conceptual art commonly known as "conceptualism". Burgin uses it as a title for the text "Yes, Difference Again: What History Plays the First Time Around as Tragedy, It Repeats as Farse". Victor Burgin, "Yes, Difference Again".
[394] Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-garde at the End of the Century*, Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press, 2001, p. 29. The first version of the chapter quoted here – "Who's Afraid of the Neo-Avant-Garde?" – was published separately in 1994 under the title "What's Neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde?"
[395] John Roberts, "Conceptual Art and Imageless Truth", in Corris (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, pp. 305-325.

> (...) the movement of consciousness cannot be expressed in descriptive form or ordinary language; it can only be experienced *in motion*. (...) The inability to fix truth in a picture is not to be considered as a limitation, but as the purposive and active basis of understanding. Truth is temporal rather than spatial.[396]

In as far as specifically concerns conceptual art, Roberts' theory is that imageless truth underlies it. The truth without image is the paradigm that, in the context of conceptual art, leads to the emancipation of art and, simultaneously, to an awareness of the limitations of that emancipation:

> (...) Conceptual art is one of the major moments where reflection on art's conditions of production is driven by a dialectical consciousness of art's possibilities and boundaries, of sensible appearance and truth, of image and language. Conceptual art is the first avant-garde art to bring philosophical consciousness *in practice* to modern art's performance of its own alienation.[397]

This statement reveals the difficulties involved in establishing a comparison between the historical avant-gardes (and the apocalyptic heroicness that characterises them, whose dying breath may well have been situationism) and conceptual art, which creates a very specific type of self-consciousness[398]. Both promote the destabilisation of the category "art" by means of a radical departure from the formal and productive rules in force, but the respective "models" of critical operativity are very different, as are the stages of modernism that contextualise them and with which they interact. In conceptual art, states Roberts,

> The critique of the category "art" does not begin from the idealist rejection of a conception of artistic practice as a "whole" – the language of abstract postulates, utopian projections, and moralizing proscriptions – but immanently from the critique of antecedently given conditions of expression, reference, and meaning.[399]

In this sense, the work of conceptual art is not only *propositional* (a fact that is evident in the new models he proposes for the relationship between art and the public), but can also be *reactive*. It also has the ability to work as a gauge of the tensions to which it is subject, or as a field of explicit negotiation between those tensions. Peter Bürger does not weigh up this possibility because in his materialism, (which is understandable in the early 1970s), he considers this questioning inoperative, in other words, incapable of effectively changing the operation of the social system as a whole.

Given these assumptions, one can conclude that the work of conceptual art should be adequate to the provisional and temporal character of the self-reflexive speculation proposed therein. With regard to this, it is significant that Roberts should repeatedly use terminology related to debate. Namely, he uses the adjectives:

- "discoursive", to refer to the inherently argumentative content of the work of conceptual art;

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[396] *Ibidem*, p. 306.
[397] *Ibidem*, p. 307.
[398] On the theme of as possible comparison between conceptual art and Dadaism, or rather the lack of pertinence of that comparison, Victor Burgin states: "It does not follow that because some institutions have been ignored, that they are under attack." Burgin, "Situational Aesthetics", p. 86.
[399] Roberts, "Conceptual Art and Imageless Truth", p. 318.

- "*dialogical*" to designate the type of relationship that is established between the work and its receivers;
- and "*conversative*" to qualify the type of artistic activity promoted by the group Art & Language and which, as a paradigm of imageless truth, consisted in nothing more that sessions of discussion about art.

Conceptual artwork is an instrument for debate that keeps artistic categories unstable just as the subject of an on-going argument is unstable. On the one hand, it conveys the speculation activated by the artist. On the other hand, it encourages the exercise of the conscience of the receiver that prolongs the sense of the proposed speculation. The meeting between the work and the receiver constitutes an *event* (word used by Roberts), not only of an eminently cognitive nature, but also *open-ended*. And for this to be so, that meeting should not detracted from, whether to a "theme" external to self-reflection, or to the field of aesthetic sensitivity – the field of the formal qualities of the work, in an abstract sense. Any of these attributes, or any similarity with the preceding artwork would detract from the cognitive territory of the work. *Only a departure from the internal protocols of the discipline allows the focus of the creative or cognitive activity to shift towards questioning it*.

The properties of the specific work – its appearance when it encounters the public – are therefore not indifferent. They must start by disillusioning the public in relation to what that they consider art. It is essential that the work should offer, first and foremost, an apparent "lack of quality". This lack of quality performs an essential function: it causes the necessary perceptive disillusionment so that the "disillusioned" receiver of the work engages in a cognitive exercise through which self-reflection occurs. This does not mean that the work should be precarious, symbolising the nature of its content – that would mean entering a universe of metaphor that is foreign to it. It is the strictly *functional* nature of the work (its concentration on the self-reflexive function, reflected in its appearance) that should be adequate to the ever-provisional nature of thought, appropriate to an imageless truth. The work is merely an experiment at the service of thought. Much as a note in a schoolbook or a laboratory experiment, the value of the work resides in its interest – its capacity to nurture thought – and not in its formal attributes.

From this point of view, the functional importance of literalness that I examined in chapter I-1 becomes clear. Firstly, literalness results from the strictest economy of formalisation. The work is literal to the extent that obedience to the enunciation does not permit the formalisation to generate any value other than that obedience. The formalisation is not an autonomous territory for the creation of artistic value, which is the case when one states that the object is "well drawn" or "well made", or expressive. In this way, the canons of the traditional artistic status of the object are downplayed. Afterwards, in as far as concerns the effect it produces, literalness constitutes an essential device for the work to perform its function. In this sense, literalness should be scrupulously guaranteed.

Also regarding this, a comparison can be established between the historical avant-gardes and

conceptual art. The development of the former is, to a great extent, a succession of departures regarding the formal precepts of the work of art. The autonomy of the pictorial elements in the first cubist paintings, the culmination of the disappearance of verisimilitude in representation, is an example of this. But more evident is the use of productive techniques such as *collage* and *assemblage*, in which evidently dissimilar bi-dimensional or three-dimensional elements are juxtaposed. In these cases, due to the dissonance between the elements of the work, it acquires a *disruptive* character.

On the one hand, there are convergences between this strategy from the start of the century and the *deliberate* lack of quality in conceptual art. The disruption seeks more than just a formal effect. Through procedures as immediate as collage or assemblage, the aim is to achieve a clear departure from the canons of quality, whether in terms of execution, or in terms of formal harmony, and it is precisely due to that departure that these works become largely significant (and in that day and age, acts of rebellion). Benjamin analyses these technical procedures based on juxtaposition, on interruption, on dissonance, etc. in the paradigmatic essay *Der Autor als Produzent*, which I have already mentioned. In an excerpt I quoted, Benjamin refers to the "concept of technique such as that which, in literary products, renders an immediate and materialistic analysis of society accessible". Technique is therefore defined as a critical instrument whose operativity is based on the procedures that formalise the work. In order to illustrate how technique can perform a critical function, Benjamin makes reference to Brecht and epic theatre. He writes:

> The interruption of action, on account of which Brecht described his theatre as 'epic', constantly counteracts illusion on the part of the audience. (...) [The common situation] is not brought home to the spectator but distanced from him. He recognizes it as the real situation – not with satisfaction, as in the theatre of Naturalism, but with astonishment. Epic theatre, therefore, does not reproduce situations; rather, it discovers them. This discovery is accomplished by means of the interruption of sequences. Yet interruption here has the character not of a stimulant but of an organizing function.[400]

The technique that Benjamin enunciates therefore produces a deviation from the technical procedures instituted or made banal (the "badly made") – a deviation that causes a sense of estrangement (in view of the lack of quality) – estrangement that causes doubt (regarding factors of valuation of the work) – a doubt that raises awareness (artistic value is questioned). In English, this critical device is designated as "estrangement" or "deracination", in an attempt to translate the term "*Verfremdung*" used by Brecht[401]. The expression "seen from the outside" can also be used to describe the possibility of stepping back from a situation we are involved in, in order to gain objectivity regarding the situation. This operative strategy is common to some avant-garde movements and to conceptual art.

But, on the other hand, the lack of quality in avant-garde works and the lack of quality in conceptual works are quite distinct from each other. Within the scope of the avant-gardes from the start of the 20th

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[400] Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer", p. 153.
[401] Within the scope of the Russian / Soviet avant-gardes, this strategy was called "ostranenie".

Century, the internal disruption of the works themselves – the formal disharmony of the parts that make up the whole – often corresponds to a disruption of the works in relation to the orthodoxies of their historical context. This is not what happens in conceptual art. The unusual appearance of the conceptual artwork does not result from the combination of heterogeneous components. It does not even result from procedures of *construction* that are made evident in the form of the work as a factor of artistic intentionality[402]. The disillusionment caused by the conceptual artwork is of another type. It mainly results from *absence*. When someone, with normal expectations, comes face to face with a work of conceptual art, what stands out is absence: either it lacks content that can be identified as a "theme", or it is redundant, or it cannot be seen, or it is invisible, or it has not been made, or else it exists in the limit of contingence, or it has no body, etc. In this sense, the works of the historical avant-gardes that best serve as forerunners to conceptual art (and I have no intention of establishing a historical link) are the coloured squares of Malevich and the readymades of Marcel Duchamp. In these, formal disruption does not occur. Their peculiar appearance also results from absence. The squares of Malevich are no more than a literal presentation of a simple enunciation. *Black Square on White Background*, a painting from 1914, is an example of this, but the approximation to absence (metaphysical in Malevich's case) is more evident in *White on White*, from 1918. In addition to the processes of de-contextualisation they imply, Duchamp's readymades are also characterised by the absences they involve. As has been widely mentioned, there are two types of absence. The work no longer possesses visual qualities that are valuable in their own right – the so-called retinal qualities – and, at the same time, no longer depends on any manual virtuosity of the artist. Its appearance is therefore marked, both by the absence of independent formal qualities and the absence of manual qualities.

If one of the most relevant operative paradigms of the historical avant-gardes is "piecing together" (dissonant or heteroclite aggregation), then the operative paradigm of conceptual art can be considered as "doing nothing".

"Piecing together" is a means of "doing badly"; and "doing badly", when it is expected that things will be well done is a means of drawing attention to the "doing". An effect of estrangement is therefore produced – an effect which can be observed from two complementary perspectives. Viewing art as a critical possibility in relation to social practices, one could say that the lack of quality deliberately introduced into the production of artistic objects causes an effect of estrangement in relation to the *production* of objects in general. It is placed under scrutiny (and takes it as a territory of poetic significance). Looking at art as a self-reflexive practice, it could be said that in order to confront its operativity with the universe of industrial production, art causes a situation of estrangement with regard to its own productive aspects; in other words, it explores and highlights its own procedures.

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[402] As we saw in the 1st chapter of this dissertation, it is precisely for this reason that the term "process" in conceptual art has a distinct acceptation to the so-called *process art*. In this, the process is understood, even if without the disruptive purposes of the historical avant-gardes, as a set of procedures that are carried out in the execution of the work and which are evident in the form of the work that these procedures bring about.

As has been said, conceptual art is contextualised above all by social practices of administrative nature. Instead of "how it is done" (assembling, collating, joining, structuring, etc.), what is more important is "how it is managed" (making or not making, showing or not showing, stating or not stating, selling or not selling, etc.). The things – the objects – become absent. They only refer to administrative activity. And it is precisely to the extent that the objects become absent, or to the extent that productive processes – the *labour* – are neutralised or relativized that administrative procedures acquire visibility. It is therefore necessary not to labour, not to do. By excluding the labour that leads to obtaining objects, it is possible to operate within the scope of *management*. As an author, the artist does not produce – he decides. Replacing, in what was stated earlier, "production" with "administration", one obtains:

Viewing art as a critical possibility with regard to social practices, one could say that the lack of quality deliberately introduced into the administration of artistic practices causes an effect of estrangement in relation to *administration* in general. It puts it under scrutiny (and turns it into a territory of poetic significance). Viewing art as a self-reflexive practice, one could say that in order to confront its operativity with the universe of the administration, art provokes a situation of estrangement in relation to its own administrative aspects; in other words, it explores and highlights its own procedures.

Next, I shall attempt to enunciate several ways of "doing nothing".

ways of “doing nothing”

The lack of quality of the work of conceptual art – and the *effect* of absence it causes – are the result of the failure to perform functions which, by convention, are expected to be performed from the idealisation of the artwork until its realisation and presentation. At least one of those functions is not performed, therefore creating a hiatus in the attributes with which the work is presented to the public. It was in this sense that I identified “doing nothing” as the operative paradigm of conceptual art. I now propose to observe in more detail how to operate in a manner so that “what is made” approaches “doing nothing”.

I mentioned the readymade as a reference for this form of proceeding. I shall use it as the starting point to distinguish between a variety of operative strategies.

When Duchamp places a urinal atop a plinth at an exhibition, he produces a dual effect of estrangement. On the one hand, the object that in its everyday context was not given any particular attention is observed more intensely, in the *unusual* context of the exhibition. Here, the object here performs a representative role: through this object its original universe is evoked and, therefore, subject to a supposedly critical perspective. On the other hand, it is the artistic production itself that is subject to estrangement, in that both the attributes necessary for a certain entity to be considered an “artwork” and the nature of the work of those who are designated as “artists” have been put into question. These two questions are thus addressed in view of the universe to which the object belongs and which it carries to the artistic scope.

Taking this into account, two distinct effects can be considered in the readymade. The first effect is the result of a shock. Its nature and the circumstance in which it is placed do not combine. A *disruptive* effect is created between the object and the context. From this point of view, as I have already mentioned, what distinguishes it from the more common disruptive effect of the works of that time is the fact that the disruption does not occur within the object, but between the object and its context. This is why the readymade operates in the field of the administrative (the decision as to “where the object is placed”) and not the field of the productive (the production of the object). The second effect is related to the opportunism involved in appropriating something already made, which indeed approaches the readymade to the paradigm of “doing nothing”. With regard to certain tasks, the artist chooses inactivity. In as far as regards the object, it is a reflex of that inactivity.

In summary, two phenomena are noted:

- *dislocation*. Something was expected and something else is in its place.
- *absence*. A determined task was expected to have been performed (and which the object should have reflected) but it wasn’t (as the object demonstrates).

The readymade therefore contains the seeds for two procedures that conceptual art will resort to: the appropriation of what already exists and inaction itself. I believe, however, that between one and another, it

is possible to define a third procedure: the artist adopts something that is external to him (a dislocation), but does not decide exactly what it is (absence of choice). He appropriates something that he does not chose:

- *indeterminacy*. A determined decision was expected, and instead there is a departure towards the unexpected[403].

In a certain way, all these strategies derive from the readymade. It is because the readymade inaugurates the possibility of acting by appointment, that they become possible.

I believe that these three strategies can be adopted at different stages of the process that goes from the conception to the presentation of the work, including its production – if it occurs. In this way, I propose to analyse the operative possibilities of conceptual art for which the paradigm is "doing nothing", according to the following table:

		stages		
		1 . conception of the work	**2 . production** of the work	**3 . presentation** of the work
operative strategies	**dislocation**	appropriation of a pre-existent content	appropriation of pre-existent object	appropriation of the pre-existent context
	indeterminacy	indeterminate content	object of indeterminate form	indeterminacy of presentation
	absence	absence of content	absence of production	absence of presentation

conception of the work

Instead of "creating" content for a work, the artist can find content that seems suitable to be put at the service of the intention with which he conceives that work. **The artist does not create content for the work: he appropriates content that already exists**. Weiner's statement SOMETHING OLD SOMETHING NEW SOMETHING BORROWED SOMETHING BLUE is an example of this [151]. In 1970, this Victorian expression becomes the content of one of Weiner's works.

Kosuth repeatedly appropriates dictionary definitions [111 . 112 . 113 . 114], which he simply enlarges in order to be read in exhibition contexts. In the transition from the pages of a common dictionary to the condition of artwork, the definitions – the most objective and unanimous definitions that exist – are subject, firstly, to the evidence of their existence as "objective and unanimous definitions" and, then, to the subsequent critique of their content.

The object of appropriation does not have to be content that already exists, but merely a device from which the specific content can be obtained or deduced. **The artist does not create content for the work:**

[403] It is mainly with this operative possibility that Robert C. Morgan identifies the enunciability that characterises conceptual art, in the chapter "From Dada to Data" in his book *Conceptual Art: An American Perspective*. Morgan, *Conceptual Art*, pp. 1-25.

he appropriates a conceptual device that shall itself determine what that very content will be. This is what occurs when LeWitt enunciates the *Incomplete Open Cubes* [98]. This is a series of 122 sculptures started in 1965, corresponding to all the three-dimensional forms that can be obtained by removing one or more wireframe edges from a cube. It does not matter that the possibilities dictated by the geometry amount to 122, or that they are those and not others. What matters indeed is the fact that LeWitt applies a geometrical question close to a charade, which constitutes a device that can determine – itself and not LeWitt – the forms that the sculptures shall possess. LeWitt replaces the subjective definition of the form with mathematical logic. As I have already explained in chapter I-1, this procedure which is typical to seriality corresponds both to an abandonment to factors external to the will of the artist, and an emptying of the work's form as a direct expression of some sort of subjectivity.

This form of operating can be radicalised in two senses: the departure towards more random enunciations (mathematical results, after all, are rather predictable); and the progressive emptying of the contents of the work (by means of the adoption of mechanisms whose logic is unusually obvious). In as far as concerns the first possibility, the best examples are not included in the category of conceptual art. Courting "the Muse of Chance" (an expression used by Hans Arp) is not, in itself, one of the purposes of conceptual art. The indeterminacy occurs, but not at the level of conception of the work, where it would acquire a programmatic character typical of the historical avant-gardes such as Dadaism and Surrealism. Instead and above all it is instrumentalised and, therefore, appears *at the service* of enunciations and not *as* an enunciation. In as far as concerns the substantive emptying of the work, Bochner is a particularly apt example. He proposes to reduce the conception of an artwork to a mere counting process (and the work to witnessing the count). It is the most elementary expression of what seriality in conceptual art can be. Bochner states that:

> The numbers resulted from the desire that I had to try and find, in my work, anything in which I could truly believe. I think that when you reach the point when you really want to do your own work, you should ask yourself what it is about what your do that really belongs to you and what was absorbed from elsewhere. Seeing that it is practically impossible to answer this question, I thought that if there was anything that I could really be sure about, that would be which number was next. After 1 comes 2, after 2 comes 3, after 3 comes 4 and so on. This seemed to be a fact, something certain, and didn't belong to anyone. Therefore it seemed an interesting starting point. I simply had to count. And everything I counted would belong to me[404]. This was, shall we say, a way of answering the question: "how does the world as I find it reveal itself?"[405]

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[404] Bochner refers to the issue of ownership. It is an administrative issue, but also, in this case, a deeply ontological one. It regards not only authorship as a problem of administrative delimitation, but as a delimitation of the "self" in relation to collective cultural construction – a construction that constitutes the environment of dislocation processes.

[405] Anne-Françoise Penders, "Rencontre avec Mel Bochner – New York, Mars 2000", *Pratiques* 9 (Fall 2000), p. 67 [Les nombres sont issus du désir que j'avais de tenter de trouver, dans mon travail, quelque chose dans lequel je pourrais vraiment croire. Je pense que lorsque vous atteignez le point où vous voulez réellement réaliser votre propre travail, vous devez vous demander ce qui, dans ce que vous faites, vous appartient en propre et ce que vous avez absorbé d'autres lieux. Comme il est à peu près impossible de répondre à cette question, j'ai pensé que, s'il y avait une chose dont je pouvais être certain, c'était que je saurais toujours quel serait le chiffre suivant. Après 1 vient 2, après 2 vient 3, après 3 vient 4, etc. Cela me parut donc un point de départ intéressant. Je pouvais juste compter. Et quoi que je compte m'appartiendrait. C'était, disons, une façon de répondre à la question: «comment se présente le monde tel que je le trouve?»].

These words of Bochner seem to contain a paradox: the artist appropriates something that he didn't invent in order to perform a work that truly belongs to him. But, as the artist himself explains, the numbers, on the one hand, are the resource that allows him to "start from scratch" and, on the other, a more complex substitute, in order to distinguish a certain entity of the world in which it is immersed. By counting, one nominates. Counting is also a form of choosing by saying "this". In this sense, Bochner appropriates two things: the counting system (approximating the content of the work to *nothing*) and the entities that he decides to count (appropriating readymade entities). In this way, the counting system operates simultaneously as something appropriated as well as the instrument of appropriation.

Finally, the intention with which a work is conceived may mean that it does not possess any content. **The artist does not create content for the work: the work comes close to not having content**. The artist who comes closest to the substantive emptying of the work is Kosuth. It is he who claims the most radical form of emptying: tautology. This is what happens in the work *Five Words in Blue Neon* [109], which is self-defining. The content comes close to being nothing.

With the irony that comes across from nothingness being announced, in 1967-1968 John Baldessari writes on a canvas:

> Everything was purged from this painting except art. No ideas have entered this work.

production of the work

The most classical of dislocation processes is the classical readymade. **The artist does not produce the work: he appropriates an already existing object**. He dislocates a certain object from a context in which it does not possess artistic status to another where it does. As I have already mentioned, this process can be understood in two ways: either as a mere economy of means, an alternative to the virtuous manual production of the artist; or as a means of producing a shock between the object and the context where it is placed. I would only like to add that this shock has relative validity that needs to be assessed historiographically, in other words, according to the historical context in question: if the readymade can operate as a provocation in the context of the historical avant-gardes, nowadays, for example, it does not have the same effect. Even within the scope of conceptual art, the readymade does not quite operate by causing a shock. As I have argued, in conceptual art the strategy of lack of quality operates in a far more complex manner that the anti-artistic rebellion of the historical avant-gardes. The dislocation is generally understood either as an operative strategy of great immediacy in as far as concerns the material production of the work, or as a resource for the construction of discourse.

Dislocation is also the strategy that best brings to light the shift of the "act of producing" to the field of administrative decisions. If, as Roberts argues, the choice of the means of production of the work (manual

/ mechanical, individual / collective, etc.) are in themselves significant[406], it is thanks to the readymade that the establishment of that thematic territory occurs within the scope of art. It is with the appearance of the readymade that production ceases to be a habit and starts to be part of the territory of the significance of the work. As Roberts succinctly states,

> (...) it is through the gap between art and aesthetics, inscribed in the act of nomination, that CA is able to incorporate philosophy and critical theory into the relations which compose art's production.[407]

So, instead of taking decisions *within the scope of* the productive process, decisions are taken *in relation to the* productive process, in other words, administrative decisions[408]. The entrance of the "already made thing" within the scope of art inaugurates operativity of an administrative kind – operativity in which context that "already made thing" may acquire meanings beyond a pure epistemological shock. On the subject of the validity of that change, Duchamp explains during an interview with Georges Charbonnier, in 1961:

> The etymological meaning of the word "art", is to do. Now, what does doing mean? Doing something means choosing a blue tube, a red tube, putting some on your palette, and always choosing the quality of blue, the quality of red, and always choosing the place to place it on the canvas, it always means choosing. In this way, in order to choose, paint tubes can be used, paintbrushes can be used, but something that has already been done can also be chosen, whether mechanical or even by the hand of another person, if one wishes, and appropriate it, for it is always a deliberate choice. Choice is what is most important, even in normal painting.[409]

The fact that the material components of the work can be designated – that is, they have a prior and recognisable existence – also has another consequence: the artist does not have to "design" forms. This fact is important because the need to define ("design") forms is contrary to doing nothing. It keeps art tied to the issue of objects. Regarding this matter, Hervé Vanel states that Bochner's evolution is "in disagreement with the love affair some artists such as Judd or LeWitt still maintain with the object, its material qualities, its *necessity*"[410]. This is why the works of LeWitt – sculptures – can be identified with a preparatory of conceptual art and, at that level, be considered still "proto-conceptual"[411].

Al Held, an abstract painter, has been attributed the authorship of the statement "All Conceptual art is just pointing at things"[412]. This was said depreciatively. But he has a certain point. If, as Duchamp explains, the activity of the artist is a succession of choices, pointing is in fact the most immediate manner

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[406] John Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form*, p.2.
[407] John Roberts, "Conceptual Art and Imageless Truth", p. 313.
[408] The vision that excludes poetic meanings in this operative possibility, in favour of strictly functional aspects – defended namely by Kosuth – is the one that fits into the territory of positivism.
[409] de Duve, *Kant after Duchamp*, p. 161-162.
[410] Hervé Vanel, "Notes sur Mel Bochner", *Pratiques 9*, pp. 24-27 [(...) en désaccord avec le romance qu'entretenaient encore certains artistes comme Judd ou LeWitt avec l'objet, ses qualités matérielles, sa *nécessité* (...)].
[411] The term "proto-conceptual" (already used in this work) is the word used by Peter Osborne to describe the work of LeWitt. For the reasons that led Osborne to classify it in that way, see: Osborne, "Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy", pp. 52-56.
[412] Tony Godfrey, *Conceptual Art*, p. 138.

of expressing a choice. It is the same as saying "this". Held translates the fundamental action subjacent to the readymade as a caricature: stating "this is art". John Baldessari adopts Held's statement as the theme for his work. He photographs several things that he finds in his everyday life with a hand, (the hand of the musician George Nicolaidis) pointing at them. He gives those works from 1969 the title *A Person Was Asked to Point* [152].

Within the field of dislocation, instead of a common object, an existent *artwork*, or a set of works, can be adopted. In this case, one enters the field of "art that quotes art". However, this is a specific type of quotation, which should not be mistaken for the type that characterises artworks such as, for example, the painting *L'Archiduc Léopold-Guillaume dans sa Galerie de Peinture* (Archduke Léopold-Guillaume in his Picture Gallery), a work by the Flemish painter David Téniers the Younger from 1647. The painting shows the Archduke inspecting his vast collection of paintings, accompanied by a group of other individuals including the painter himself, self-portrayed. Despite the fact that it isn't "self-reflexive" in the sense used here, the painting reflects something that at the time was an aspect of the conjuncture of artistic practice – the ownership and use of artworks. In this artwork, no ambiguity resides between the art referred to (the paintings shown) and the art presented (Téniers' own painting). Conversely, in the type of appropriation I refer to as being conceptual, the artist re-presents the work of another artist as his own. **The artist does not produce a work: he appropriates a work that already exists**. One example is the solution that Weiner finds to produce SOMETHING OLD SOMETHING NEW SOMETHING BORROWED SOMETHING BLUE: he asks Yves Klein to lend him a blue sculpture. Then the "old" and the "new" make reference to the different characteristics of the work before and after the dislocation to: an *old* sculpture by Klein becomes a *new* work by Weiner.

The prime example of the moustache and the goatee that Duchamp adds (*L.H.O.O.Q.*, 1919[413]), and then removes (*L.H.O.O.Q. Shaved*, 1965[414]), to a reproduction of the *Mona Lisa* can also be mentioned. Here, Duchamp resorts to a strategy of subversive reuse of an existing work, which will later be widely used by the situationists under the designation *détournement* (turnabout, misappropriation). But this strategy, due to its destructive aspect, is closer to the anti-artistic rebellion of the historical avant-gardes than to conceptual self-reflection.

The possibility of re-exhibiting a set of existing works is closer to the type of quotation found in Téniers' painting. **The artist does not produce a work: he reorganises works that already exist.** He acts as a reorganiser of materials. This is what Marcel Broodthaers does in order to produce his work *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* (Museum of Modern Art, Eagle Section[415]). As opposed

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[413] Duchamp draws a moustache and a goatee on a postcard of Mona Lisa and calls the work *L.H.O.O.Q.* – an acronym which, in French, sounds rather similar to the words "Elle a chaud au cul" (She has a hot backside).

[414] In one of the multiple version of the readymade L.H.O.O.Q., Duchamp does not draw a moustache and goatee, restoring the image to its original appearance, and adds the word "shaved" to the title.

[415] "Aigles" can also mean insignias.

to a museum, this work is an itinerant installation that is presented between 1968 and 1972 in several forms and at a variety of locations. In its first version, at the artist's house in Brussels, it is simply an arrangement of wooden boxes usually used for transporting artworks, with the warning "fragile", and a series of postcards illustrating 19th Century works hanging on the wall [148]. Later, Broodthaers presents this work in museums, using real works from those museums and common objects. However, in this first version, the quotation coincides with the replacement of the real works by its *easier* form of representation (museum souvenirs, they themselves transformed into readymades) [149].

Asher and Haacke also produce works through the appropriation of existing artworks in exhibition contexts, in order to subject the functional protocols and political programs of the respective institutions to critical analysis.

I referred to works whose form is determined randomly. Now, in order to address production, I shall state the possibility of random definition being focused on the materiality of the work. Instead of being present in a process that ends with the definition of a stable work, the randomness characterises the product, which is kept unstable[416]. The work operates as a device ready for the unexpected, producing itself in different ways throughout its existence. **The artist does not define the form of the work: he merely defines a device that is permanently changing its form according to external factors**. The work depends on phenomena that are external to it, to which it is sensitive and reacts by defining its own form.

Condensation Cube, from 1963-65, is one of the most paradigmatic examples of a conceptual artwork that never stabilises and remains dependent on circumstantial factors: a given amount of water inside a glass cube reacts to the external temperature, by evaporating, condensing and therefore keeping the cube's appearance unstable [130].

Dependence on external factors also characterises *Following Piece* by Acconci, from 1969 [106 . 107]. As I explained earlier, during 23 consecutive days Acconci follows someone walking in a New York street until they enter a private area. **The artist does not define the work: he leaves it to the decisions of others.** With regard to this work of his, Acconci wrote:

> Adjunctive relationship: I add myself on to another person (I give up control/I don't have to control myself/I become dependent on the other person/I need that other person, that other person doesn't need me)...
> (My time and space are taken up, out of myself, to a larger system.)
> Fall into position in a system. I can be substituted for. I can be replaced. My positional value counts here, not my individual characteristics.[417]

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[416] This possibility was addressed at the end of the 1st chapter, with regard to materiality, but is mentioned at this point once again because it is a strategy of *indeterminacy*.
[417] Osborne (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, p. 84.

This work by Acconci can be seen as a choice to "not do anything" in as far as nothing results from this, that is, it does not result in a product. The work is composed of an action. But, at this point, I refer to *Following Piece* because of "what the artist does (not do)", and not because of "what the work is" (a theme that has already been examined in the first chapter of the dissertation). And *by not doing* the artist decides more than just a production strategy that will afterwards be responsible for determining what happens next.

If the legitimacy of the readymade, as Duchamp explains, is based on the fact that choice is the essential element in artistic practice, one can consider the possibility that the work is simply that choice. It is condition enough that a choice be communicated for an artwork to exist – a choice that defines what the work is. From a productive point of view, one literally does nothing. **The artist does not produce a work: he merely enunciates it**. Already extensively examined in chapter I-1 of this dissertation, this possibility can be paradigmatically illustrated through the declarations of Weiner or by his book *Statements* [117] – a group of enunciations of works compiled in a book, or a set of works presented in the form of a book, or a book of enunciations that is, in its own right, an artwork.

The manner in which the work is enunciated can then go without any written words and be communicated solely using immaterial supports. As mentioned in the first chapter, Ian Wilson just speaks to his audience and Robert Barry, in *Telepathic Piece*, proposes to communicate telepathically.

presentation of the work

The readymade, as an operative strategy, involves awarding the status of artwork to something that already exists. The possibility I will enunciate now does not consist in the dislocation of a foreign entity into the artistic context, but rather highlighting a phenomenon that is already to be found or takes place in that context. **The artist does not present *a* work: he merely presents the exhibition space that is already there**. The work is conceived starting off from the space or the activity at the locations where it is shown.

I have already mentioned the work *Photopath* by Victor Burgin – photographs of the flooring of a room placed on top of that same flooring [115 . 116]. In that work, we see what is already there, but "what is already there" exists somewhere in between the *trompe l'oeil* image that is presented (which can be seen) and the mental image on forms of the real flooring (and which cannot be seen). It is seen in a different, more construed way. *It is re-seen*. On the matter of *Photopath*, Burgin explains:

> How do you draw attention to the floor without altering the form of the floor? The photographs of the floor were a convenient way of doing this.[418]

[418] "Interview with Victor Burgin", in John Roberts (ed.), *The Impossible Document: Photography and Conceptual Art in Britain 1966-1976*, London: Camerawork, 1997, p. 82.

In the text "Situational Aesthetics", Burgin enunciates the possibility of a contingent, temporal art – an art made mainly of interventions dependent on the respective context and whose aim is not to create objects, but *situations*. In this sense, it refers to the possibility of using "what is already there". He writes:

> The artist is apt to see himself not as a creator of new material forms but rather as a coordinator of existing forms, and may therefore choose to subtract materials from the environment.[419]

In the intervention he performs, on the first of many occasions, in 1969 in the Galerie Heiner Friedrich Gallery in Munich – an intervention under the title *Measurement Room* [123] – Bochner uses adhesive tape and *transfer* numbers in order to explicate, on the room walls, the planimetric and altimetric elevation of all the architectural elements that define it. The elevation is made explicit in the actual room it refers to, maintaining the exact complexion of graphical notation. On one hand, this work can be seen as a confrontation between the reality of space and an abstract system of control and representation of that space. Bochner states:

> The measurements project a mental representation of the space onto the very space.[420]

But, on the other hand, the intervention in the gallery can also function as a device emphasising the space. It makes one look attentively at the elements that limit and characterise the gallery space, usually relegated to a secondary role as a background or support for the presence of artworks. "looking at art in a space" is replaced by "looking at the art space".

In 1974, Michael Asher intervenes at the *Claire Copley Gallery*, in Los Angeles. He merely removes the wall that separates the space for exhibitions (public area) from the administrative space (private area) [150]. With the removal of this partition, Asher creates a *situation* where visitors to the art gallery, instead of remaining in a quiet microclimate created for observing artworks, are confronted with a single possibility: to observe the administrative and financial labour which, as the support (and purpose) of the activity of galleries, is usually discretely hidden away.

"Seeing what is already there" is a strategy that can also be associated to John Cage and, specifically, to his famous piece *4'33"*, from 1952 (therefore prior to conceptual art). According to the instructions of Cage, the musician, or band of musicians who perform this piece should remain in silence for the three movements of the piece: the first movement is 30 seconds long; the second is 2 minutes and 23 seconds long; finally, the third movement is 1 minute and 40 seconds long – adding up to the total of 4 minutes and 33 seconds as the title indicates. The musicians do not play the instruments, but the silence that is created is relative. In

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[419] Burgin, "Situational Aesthetics", p. 81.
[420] Osborne (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, p. 100 [originally published in: *Richard S. Field & Mel Bochner, Mel Bochner: Thought Made Visible 1966-1973*, New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1995].

the space where this piece is performed, instead of the music of instruments, what can be heard are the background sounds. The piece has an enabling function, letting the people listen to whatever is there. In relation to the classification I have established here, this piece stands in an ambiguous territory. It proposes to show what is already there but, at the same time, "what is already there" is not chosen by the artist, but instead depends on the circumstances. The work's form is indeterminate. The same can be said about a work of conceptual art: *Recording of Climate in Art Exhibition* by Hans Haacke. It is composed of a thermograph, a barograph and a hydrograph that register the variations in temperature, pressure, humidity of an exhibition area. These variations are registered in a chart whose design is dictated by the operation of the devices themselves [133]. In this case, just as with *4'33"*, not only the form of the work depends on external conditions, but the very existence of the work is contingent. It exists and transforms only under the circumstances in which it is *operating*, in other words, through the activation of its performance. **The artist does not present *a* work: he only presents a device that displays the context of the presentation that is already there**. The work is a device.

These operative modalities are well suited to Haacke's interest in systems and, namely, the progressive interest in social systems that condition art. (I have already mentioned his connection to Bourdieu.) Haacke's works therefore acquire the character of diagnostic or, in more politicised cases, the character of denouncement. The abandonment to "whatever comes" therefore seeks to obtain results, much like a laboratory procedure. It seeks to reveal what the reality is, but is not visible. The process of obtaining a form of the work is put at the service of that task.

In 1969, Haacke installs a work at the Howard Wise Gallery which is given the title *Gallery-Goers' Birthday and Residence Profile, Part I* [145]. Visitors are invited to mark the place where they were born (with a red pin) and the place where they live (with a blue pin) on a set of maps of New York with different scales and areas. The participation of the visitors permitted a socio-geographical portrait of themselves or, better said, a double portrait: the social portrait of the individuals who visit the prestigious "avant-garde" gallery and simultaneously a social portrait of the city's territory. In 1970, Haacke installs the *MoMA Poll* in the New York museum – a ballot for the re-election of Rockefeller [146]. One again in this work, Haacke simply produces the device that generates the work, which is transformed by agents external to it. These agents ultimately determine the form of the work. In this case, it is they who determine the thing that most resembles "art" in the traditional sense; the coloured area inside the acrylic boxes.

In any of these three works by Haacke, the actual "(environmental or political) conjuncture of the presentation of the work" is characterised, used as readymade material.

In both of the two latter works, a diagnosis is also produced which appears over time, acquiring a visual nature (on the maps or inside the acrylic boxes), a little like a photograph being revealed. But, as opposed to what happens in a photograph, what is revealed is not of a visual nature. These diagnostics by Haacke, like others this artist produces, give visibility to non-visual phenomena – a process which, as I have

argued, is paradigmatic in relation to the operativity of conceptual art in general.

Finally, the presentation of the work, it too, can be a field where nothing is done. Nothing is presented. I have already referred to this possibility in the first chapter of the dissertation, with regard to artists who experiment with operating at the level of interfaces of contact with the (supposed) work. **The artist does not present the work: he merely creates a situation that reveals the existence, or the possibility of the existence of the work**. The work is transformed into a secret. This is what happens with *Secret Painting* by the Art & Language collective – a work whose content is hidden by a layer of black paint [137] – or in *Closed Gallery Piece* by Barry [140 . 141] – in which the space where the supposed works are to be found is not accessible.

theme II

The work reveals infrastructural aspects of artistic practice.

2 architecture

conditions for a work to be conceptual:	
I The work is the literal translation of an idea.	**II** The work reveals infrastructural aspects of artistic practice.

theme I – 1 conceptual art	theme II – 1 conceptual art
theme I – 2 architecture	theme II – 2 architecture

In this chapter, I intend to determine what a "self-reflexive architecture" may represent using the self-reflexivity of conceptual art as a point of reference. Similarly to what happens in art, a self-reflexive architecture would consist in architecture about architecture. More specifically, seeing that the *project* is the theme examined here, what is most interesting for me are *architecture projects* about *architecture projects*.

In very general terms, I shall adhere to the structure of the previous chapter, However, here the focus on the different themes I looked into with regard to conceptual art is different. I shall not return to the discussion of what is understood as "administrative" within the conceptual context. In theoretical terms, it is no different in the context of the architecture project and shall only be taken as a reference in some points of the argument. The same can be said about the disillusionment strategies that bring about self-reflexivity. It is mainly a matter of identifying them within the scope of the project rather than returning to the discussion on the self-reflexive function itself – which has already been explained. On the other hand, the discussions on the subject of the emptying of the work and its political aspects (aspects which, in the project, emerge in a very specific manner) shall be examined in greater depth.

In as far as concerns what I said about conceptual art, the first statement I can make about self-reflexivity in architecture is related to how it becomes manifest through the work. I argued that the self-reflexivity of conceptual art can follow two operating models: either the work is, itself, discourse; or the work operates as a "sample of an art work" at the service of a laboratory experiment of critical speculation. The architecture project admits only one of these two possibilities identified in art. It is not possible to present a theoretical text or a set of elements that illustrate a thesis and award them the status of "work of architecture". At least, this cannot be done within the scope of the *project*. The self-reflexive discourse in itself cannot be mistaken for what the definition of an artifact is. In this way, the work of architecture plays an *exemplificative* role.

As I said, for the work to be reduced to its own condition as "work" and therefore become representative of works in general, it has to be emptied of content, whether "thematic" or "plastic". This means that:

(1) The work does not perform a mimetic or symbolic function. It does not transport any content that is external to it to the scope of the architectural form.

(2) The work does not acquire any value that is internal to its form. What I mean by this is that the work does not seek a determined abstract "plastic" quality, based on factors such as colour, texture, composition, volumetry, etc.

In addition to these types of content, common to art works, architecture works permit another type of content. Architecture has a vocation for another concept of artifacts which are based on a determined constructive logic. Their form is dictated by the potential and the limitations of the constructive system used. Especially for this reason, but also due to the stylistic conventions established in parallel with this phenomenon, recognisable codes are commonly created – a set of formal elements and rules for combining these elements that are instituted and can serve as the basis for the conception of the form. This is the starting point that permits the *artisticness* of the project to reside in effects of formal manipulation that are no more than variations or deviations from the purest rules or canons of the code. As we know, it is on this assumption that the entire history of classicist architecture is based. Part of so-called "post-modern" architecture also operates in this field, either through the recovery of classical language (the most comical approach), or through a subversive or affected interpretation of the rationalist code (perpetuating the type of "production of meaning through variation" that characterises five centuries of western classicist architecture). Taking into account this typically architectural phenomenon, the emptying of the work of architecture also involves the following:

(3) The work does not build a discourse, a metaphor or sensory effect based on its own language. Better even: the work does not adopt a code. The code itself carries a framework of meanings.

Emptied of these three qualities, the work may start to reflect the assumptions – values and mechanisms –

subjacent to these qualities. Putting the question to the person observing it: "is this a work of architecture?" the work leads to other questions such as "what values support the idea that this is a work of architecture? Or, even, "what is a work of architecture?" It becomes self-reflexive: architecture about architecture.

It is also possible to discuss the modernist genesis of self-reflexivity in architecture – a question raised by Alexander Alberro with regard to conceptual art. When Alberro mentions practices that "systematically problematize and dismantle the integral elements of the traditional structure of the artwork", it isn't hard to identify them with experiments carried out within the scope of the modern movement. I argued, in a prior work of mine, that the modern movement, through the work of its most renowned figures, performs what is truly a dissection of works of architecture in order to identify its *basic components*[421]. Much as Mendeleiev identifies the basic constituents of matter, creating the periodic table in 1869, modern architects identify the basic elements in architectural artifacts and the city. They do it through their own projects, conferring expression on those constituents – making them evident. At the time, I produced a diagram according to which I proposed to break down the modernist dissection in three aspects with repercussions on the Vitruvian triad – *Venustas* (form), *Firmitas* (construction) and *Utilitas* (program).

- The *form* is dissected, either into volumes, preferably white (the *essential volumetry* inherent, for example, to the analyses of form performed by Le Corbusier[422]), or in colour planes laid out in the space (a *plastic essence* of the so-called "neoplasticism" of the De Stijl group[423]).
- The *construction* is dissected into structural elements and panels defining the space. This task is completed by making the truth of the materials explicit – which, from this point of view, may be understood as a listing of constructive constituents at a minor scale. (As I stated earlier, with regard to neo-brutalism, the infrastructures remain taboo until the late 1950s.)
- The *program* is dissected into elementary functions, just like the study of assembly lines in factories. Through the rational reassembly of these elementary functions, combination systems are created that advance in scale, from "minimal units" up to the city organised into zones, and including intermediate units known as "buildings" and the separation of different types of traffic (automotive, pedestrian, distribution of goods and services, etc.) that combine the different parts[424].

It can be said that these different types of dissection perform a self-reflexive role, at least in the sense the Alberro attributes to self-reflexivity when he associates it to a modernist origin. They reveal the entities that are at the basis of the conception of any given project. *The project classifies the ingredients of the projects*.

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[421] José Capela, *Para uma Arquitectura Funcional* (Pedagogic Aptitude and Scientific Capacity Tests taken at University of Minho), 2004, unpublished, pp. 8-24.
[422] See: Le Corbusier, *Vers une Architecture*.
[423] See: Theo van Doesburg, "Principios del Nuevo Arte Plástico", pp. 29-92.
[424] See: Leonardo Benevolo, Carlo Melograni & Tommaso Gíura Longo, *Projectar a Cidade Moderna*, 2nd ed., Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 1987 [originally published as: *La Progettazione della Città Moderna*, Bari: Laterza, 1977].

In art, Alberro refers to the disassembly of the work as a physical or visual entity. He refers to a type of disassembly that is easily identified with the *formal* and *constructive* aspects of the dissection promoted within the scope of architecture in the modern movement. When the form or the construction of the architectural artifacts is dissected, what comes into question is a visual matter. As I have argued, this type of analysis is different from the exploration performed by conceptual art around the assumptions and values inherent to artistic practice – what I call "infrastructural aspects of artistic practice" – which are of a non-visual nature. Therefore, the dissection of the form or construction lies outside the scope of conceptual self-reflexivity[425].

These considerations do not apply, however, to the dissection of the program. The function is of an abstract, non-visual nature. The dissection is invisible and only acquires expression through the work when the axiom "form follows function" is not only *utilised*, but also *illustrated* by the form. A prime example of this happening is when one uses the pavilion system and the form results from the direct transposition of a functional organogram into three dimensions. The projects therefore start to express the dissection that is inherent to them, in other words, conferring visibility on non-visual elements. They operate exactly like a work of conceptual art. In this sense, one could ask: can projects based on functionalist principles and which, additionally, express the diagrams inherent to their conception be considered self-reflexive in the conceptual sense? However, this question would be reductionist. I believe that functionalism can lead towards the substantive emptying of the work and, to that extent, be related to conceptual practices. I shall return to this subject later, when I discuss the work of Hannes Meyer. For the time being, I would like to tackle this problem from another perspective – the validity of the dissection itself as a self-reflexive strategy.

What does dissecting consist in? It consists in starting off with an entity, phenomenon, process, etc., and disassembling it into its constituents. It consists in identifying the "lines" that separate the different parts and cutting them up along those lines, giving the parts separated in this way an autonomy that was only relative beforehand. The constituents are isolated – a reductionist task. To that extent, the dissection seeks the acknowledgment of what the facts are. It is a procedure of pure analysis that seeks to passively *reach* the constitution of things. Conceptual self-reflexivity operates in the opposite direction: it seeks to disturb the logic not of things, but of convention with regard to those things. It problematizes. *Dissecting* only disturbs convention if, by some chance, its results cause a new convention to be instated a (this is in fact what happens in science), while conceptual self-reflexivity operates by deliberately disturbing convention. As I mentioned earlier, the disillusionment that the work causes with regard to convention – in other words, in relation to what it was expected to be – is the circumstance conducive to an exercise of consciousness. Self-reflexivity is based on a destructive task. It starts with the anomaly, the destabilisation. It has this in common with the historical avant-gardes.

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[425] Once again, art that can be identified with the dissection of form and construction is modern "abstract art" – works of artists such as, for example, Mondrian or the Russian constructivists.

Taking this into consideration, one can see that distinguishing the parts of a program and explaining the logic according to which these parts are distributed in a building or territory do not have, in themselves, a self-reflexive scope. It is a procedure that does not imply reflecting on "the function of architecture". It does not destabilise the disciplinary assumptions with regard to function. It can even be a merely deterministic task, as the post-modernists so like to put it. *Using* a rule is very different to *discussing it*.

I have brought the argument to a theme that will be discussed more extensively only at the end of this chapter – the existence, in the work, of an anomaly that is capable of triggering self-reflection. As I argued in the previous chapter, in conceptual practices this anomaly is related to the absence of determined components or conventional qualities of the work, and not with disruptive strategies such as *collage* or *montage*, which appertain to the historical avant-gardes.

I have referred to this theme now because, since this chapter is dedicated to self-reflexivity within the scope of architecture, it is essential to bear in mind that the production of an anomaly in the work raises problems different to those within the scope of art. One difficulty immediately arises: the destabilisation that impels self-reflection collides against the stability usually associated to architecture. Architecture is expected to be stable – in two ways. As Jonathan Hill writes (specifically with regard to the issue of solidity and stability of architectural artifacts and with reference to the modern day),

> A building is supposed to be solid and certain; so too is the practice of architects. One is a reflection of the other. Numerous procedures, such as building regulations and contractual liability ensure that building fabric is solid and certain. As they want to be solidly respectable rather than sued, architects tend to repeat themselves. Threatened from within and without, they are caught in a vicious circle. To promote and defend their idea of architecture they adopt practices, forms and materials already identified with their work of architects, ever diminishing their home. As threats escalate and boundaries weaken, the desire for greater stability is evident in both the family home and the home of architects. Rather than a creative engagement with new conditions, the realization that a home is weak and becoming weaker often results in increasing desire for one that is strong.[426]

Firstly, architectural artifacts are expected to ensure *physical* or *environmental* stability for those who live in them (although there are artifacts which aim to provide different levels of stability). Then, the stability of architectural artifacts tends to be valued in social terms for their capacity to represent stability in an abstract sense. No other artistic practice is capable of producing works that are such eloquent demonstrations of perenniality. Therefore, the stability of architectural works has both a real and a symbolic dimension.

Regarding this, Adolf Loos summarises the difference that exists between art and architecture, stating that:

> The work of art wants to draw people out of their state of comfort. The house has to serve comfort.[427]

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[426] Hill, *Immaterial Architecture*, pp. 29-30.

[427] Adolf Loos, "Architecture", in Yehuda Safran & Wilfried Wang (eds.), *The Architecture of Adolf Loos (exhibition catalogue),* London: Arts

This appreciation by Loos comes from the days of the historical avant-gardes. Despite being a time when artistic phenomena with a vocation for destabilisation appear, such as those originating the idea of "avant-garde", what is self-reflexive in architecture in those days can hardly be compared to the rebellion of the avant-gardes. In fact, it is significant that someone like Loos, so close to the Dadaists[428], should vindicate comfort in architecture. At the same time as more or less delirious ideas of a technological future and the construction of political programs collateral to artistic experimentation were exalted, all of architecture's self-reflexive production is mainly related, as I said, to an approximation to scientific objectivity – to which I associate the experiments with the dissection of architectural artifacts. The architecture is perhaps better qualified as *modernist* rather than *avant-garde*.

Hilde Heynen raises the problem of "architecture as an avant-garde", in relation to the modern condition of architecture, in her book *Architecture and Modernity: A Critique*[429] published in 1999. Using her knowledge of several acceptations of "modernity" as his reference framework, Heynen debates the discrepancy between, on the one hand, the radical philosophical thought of the School of Frankfurt and avant-garde artistic practices and, on the other hand, the moderate compromises eventually imposed on the most ambitious architectural theories and practices. In order to work out the concept of "avant-garde", Heynen distinguishes between the perspective of two authors – Renato Poggioli and Peter Bürger. Poggioli characterises avant-garde as having a destructive nature (in relation to the values that precede or contextualise them) as well as self-destructive (because its evolution leads to nihilism and, in the end, its own dissolution: "it sacrifices itself on the altar of cultural progress"[430]). For his turn, Bürger sees the actions of the avant-garde as dialectic. Despite performing destructive purposes, in Bürger's opinion, the avant-garde also has a constructive or, as he puts it, *programmatic* vocation.

Effectively, according to the book *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Theory of Avant-garde) which Bürger publishes in 1984, the historical avant-gardes are not limited to a critical exercise carried out within the art work, specific to so-called "bourgeois art". Its mission is to extinguish the autonomy of the art work, in order to instate a new circumstance of "dissolution of art in the everyday life". This constitutes a program. It is a constructive idea of the future.

Bürger does not refer to architecture in *Theorie der Avantgarde*. And it is odd that he does not do so. In relative terms, architecture is in a very particular situation, both in terms of the general possibility of art having a program of effective transformation of social practices, and the specific possibility of the dissolution of art in the everyday life. Both possibilities are guaranteed by the actual definition of architecture. In this way, the "dissolution of art in the everyday life" intended by the historical avant-gardes is not destabilising

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Council, 1987, p. 108.

[428] Regarding possible intersections between architecture and the historical avant-gardes, see: Yago Conde, *Architecture of the Indeterminacy*, Barcelona: Actar, 2000.

[429] Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity*.

[430] *Ibidem*, pp. 27-28.

when applied to the scope of architecture. In architecture, the most that can occur is the questioning of the relationship that the project establishes with the everyday life, namely through its instruments of representation of what is *real*. This is what Lefebvre does a few decades later.

It is not easy to find the place for "architecture as an avant-garde". In the context of the historical avant-gardes that these authors describe, architecture is faced, on the one hand, with an excessively destructive vocation for the function that its artifacts serve and, on the other hand, with a redundantly constructive program in view of its traditional interference in the everyday life.

The self-reflexive architecture I propose to identify and discuss is located in a territory that is still that of architecture (with everything this can imply that is stable as an artifact and, consequently, as a theoretical field), but which is undermined by the conceptual discomfort (because theoretical values, and eventually artifacts, are destabilised). Naturally, this is not discomfort in the literal sense (nor is that the discomfort Loos refers to). The deviation of the project from adequate supports for the everyday life would be a deviation to outside the actual scope of the project. The self-reflection within the project is not performed to the detriment of the service that the designed work of architecture will provide as a support for daily living. The deviation that effectively occurs is the departure from the *assumptions* inherent to the project – the deviation that allows those same assumptions to be examined.

This assumption delimits what, in architecture, the substantive emptying of the work may be. The emptying can only occur around an unalienable "substantive nucleus" that is the actual definition of the "architecture project" and its artifactual and utilitarian vocation. Comfort (here in its literal sense) is a defining substance in architecture, even when the concept of comfort can be, itself, subject to critical revision. The question that can be placed is knowing whether the self-reflexive task occurs in parallel to the functional mission of the artifacts, or if it seeks the function itself.

- In the first possibility, function is suspended – either by being kept away from the theme of self-reflection or by being sent to the scope of dystopia. These are the cases where emptying strategies are chosen.
- Under the second possibility, self-reflection is a route, or a consequence, of obtaining the artifacts that are intended to be better supports for the use that will be made of them. The empirical condition of architecture, in its different aspects, is taken as the territory of critique (as we shall see, of a principally political nature).

I believe that it is from this difference that the opposition between the "critical" or "post-critical" nature of self-reflexive architecture arises – an opposition that stirred the recent history of architecture theory.

These are the two possibilities that I shall examine in the next two sub-chapters.

the emptying of the project (and the "politics" in the project)

In this sub-chapter, I shall discuss the possibility that a project can vehicle a definition of "architecture" through its substantive emptying, taking as reference the purposes and strategies that I associated beforehand with *analytical* conceptual art[431].

The first difficulty raised in relation to the substantive emptying of the work of architecture is the fact that it has function. The quality of the architecture, in its essential function as a support for daily life, always depends on the quality of the relationship it can provide to the person who inhabits it. Whatever the perspective adopted to observe that relationship (and even when examined in a highly scientific manner), it is always a matter of weighing up factors of an empirical order. The functional nature of the architectural artifacts determines, in itself, that "non-empirical architecture" cannot exist. To use Ayer's terminology, there are no purely *analytical* architecture works whose "validity depends solely on the definitions of the symbols it contains". At least in part, their validity is always "determined by the facts of experience".

I already approached this theme in chapter I-2 when I discussed the possibility of a generative process being independent of function. I argued that it cannot; that the distancing from function is, in itself, an option of an eminently functional nature. And this is the case precisely because architecture cannot escape function and, in this way "distancing from function" reverts to function.

Therefore, it is not possible to refer to an "autonomous architecture" similar to the "autonomous art" I discussed in the previous chapter. It is not possible to empty a work of architecture so very completely (the paradigm of the analytical works). All one can do is to try and *isolate* the factors of a project and subject them to emptying. This will always be a partial task. In view of this partiality, what I propose to ask in this sub-chapter is: to what extent can a work of architecture be emptied? To what extent can it be emptied of certain aspects so that they are isolated within it allowing other aspects to be considered? What purposes can such a task serve?

Therefore, I shall examine the *partial* emptying of the project – an emptying which, to the extent that it is partial, admits different implications. While the different aspects of analytical conceptual art were examined here as a coherent set and almost always illustrated using the same works (by Kosuth), in architecture this is not possible. In this sense, I propose to define three forms of achieving the emptying of architectural works:

(1) *projects that are emptied of content in order to expose the "mechanisms of their own writing"* (to use an expression by Manfredo Tafuri[432])

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[431] I have already examined this subject in: Capela, "Conceptualismo em Arquitectura".

[432] Manfredo Tafuri, "L'Architecture dans le Boudoir: The Language of Criticism and the Criticism of Language", transl. Victor Caliendro, in Hays (ed.), *Oppositions Reader*, p. 309 [originally a speech at a conference "L'Architecture dans le Boudoir: Il Linguaggio della Critica e la Critica del Linguaggio" in 1974] [the mechanism of its own writing].

This is the type of emptying that Eisenman and Fujii promote in the projects I mentioned earlier, regarding process. I shall therefore return to the works of these two architects.

(2) *projects whose content is the void itself*

Representing is accepted, but the theme is the void. Language is used to say nothing, rather, to deliberately say "nothing". I shall use the *Hochhaustadt* project by Ludwig Hilberseimer as a reference and, also, the manifests *No-Stop City* by the collective Archizoom and *Monumento Continuo* by the collective Superstudio.

(3) *projects that tend to be, not* tautological*, but* redundant*, in relation to the context to which they belong*

Seeing that it is impossible for the projects to be tautological in themselves, they can become redundant in relation to the context to which they belong – abstaining from any content other than that which is "pre-existent". This is what happens namely within the scope of Italian neo-rationalism (the architectural trend which Sola-Morales relates to conceptual art).

I shall discuss these three means separately. In as far as concerns each of them, I shall reach a conclusion about the relationship between, on the one hand, the type of emptying that is promoted and, on the other, what resists that emptying and remains inevitably empirical in the project.

Finally, I shall refer to the possibility that a project which results from the statement by the architect that a given entity "is architecture" – the operating model that started with the readymade and was principally adopted by *analytical* artists such as Kosuth. For this purpose, I shall examine the works of the duo Lacaton & Vassal and, particularly, works that come close to the operating model of the readymade.

projects that are emptied of content in order to expose the "mechanisms of their own writing"

"Isolate factors whose validity is enclosed within their scope" is what Eisenman and Fujii do in the projects that I examined on the subject of process. The logic of aggregating forms, in themselves, does not require empirical confirmation. A mass composed of two juxtaposed volumes results from the juxtaposition of those two volumes – it is a tautological statement. It is as tautological as "1 + 1 = 2".

In projects of this type, self-reflexivity focuses on the logics of formal constitution of artifacts and the manner that those logics are rendered intelligible in the forms themselves. The artifacts are not only seen as the result of a determined set of rules and amalgamation of particles, but they make those rules evident. As I have already mentioned, Eisenman and Fujii exclude all symbolic references from their projects. They empty the forms of semantic content, whether based outside architecture, or regarding function (form does not illustrate function), or even those related to "architectural languages" (the form does not obey a recognisable code). They attempt, within their own project practices, to enunciate systems that generate the form and are subjacent to architecture as the practice of configuration and as a communicative platform.

Eisenman claims that the experiments he develops in *Houses of Cards* seek to define an autonomous architecture. Just as happens with conceptual art, when the work is emptied of all thematic substance in order to become a definition of "art", Eisenman intends his projects to be "pure architecture", he wants all that defines the autonomous discipline of architecture – its essence, the essence found in the syntactic genesis of forms – to be isolated within them.

Adrian Forty detects a paradox within this intention of Eisenman's. He writes:

> Given that it was a long-term ambition of Eisenman's to demonstrate the independence and self-sufficiency of architecture as a discipline, it was slightly ironic that he resorted to an analogy with language to describe the specificity of architecture.[433]

This is a paradox, in part similar to the one I identified in chapter II-1, when I discussed the relationship between art and philosophy that is established in the field of conceptual art. I am talking about the paradox that results from the fact that analytical conceptual art claims an autonomous practice, performing a duty that is appropriate to philosophy for this purpose. Much as analytical conceptual art seeks the autonomy of art likening it to a philosophical being, Eisenman seeks the autonomy of architecture by approximating it to research within the scope of linguistics. However, more significantly, what is common to both paradoxes is what sets them apart. I believe that the architectural paradox has quite different implications to that of art.

In order to define itself, analytical conceptual art is actually *self-defining*, most times under the form of a work that performs an exemplificative function. An art work is presented in order to say "this is art" or "art is this". A definition of what is "art" is presented as a coherent and wholesome category. This is why analytical conceptual art approaches philosophy – the discipline of definitions, *par excellence*. This is not what occurs when Eisenman attempts to define "architecture" through his projects. In these, architecture tries to define itself through its *formal articulation and communication mechanisms* – an aspect which is clearly incomplete when considering the definition of architectural artifacts. Architecture is not defined, throughout its specificity, as a platform of communication. Eisenman says so himself. When he acknowledges that the specificity of architecture acts as a limit to what the emptying of the work can be, he writes:

> There is no conceptual aspect in architecture which can be thought of without the concept of pragmatic and functional objects, otherwise is not an architectural conception.[434]

If that which is pragmatic and functional is necessary for an artifact to be considered a work of architecture, the essence that Eisenman seeks is not quite a "definition of architecture". Further ahead, in the same text, referring specifically to the framework of the "pragmatic and functional objects" in his investigation, Eisenman explains:

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[433] Forty, *Words and Buildings*, p. 83.
[434] Eisenman, "Notes on Conceptual Architecture", p. 16.

> To make something conceptual in architecture would require taking the pragmatic and functional aspects and placing them in a conceptual matrix, where their primary existence is no longer interpreted from the physical fact of being a bathroom or closet, but rather the functional aspect bathroom or closet becomes secondary to some primary reading as a notation in a conceptual context.[435]

In other words, for Eisenman, the functional, empirical aspects of the project are reduced to a contingency, by definition required for the existence *architecture*, but with little meaning in the essential value of *Architecture*[436]. What determines this change of status? The syntactic quality of the form. The programmatic and functional aspects of the project are delimited so as not to contaminate the syntactic focus of the research. The functional and living condition of the buildings is subordinate to the conceptual matrix of form to such an extent that Eisenman considers the realisation, or not, of his projects to be indifferent. The term "*cardboard architecture*" used by Eisenman (which I mentioned in chapter I-2) also has this meaning. The architectural quality of architecture is already contained within the model.

The elevation of construction to the status of architecture – to the status of entity with an artistic dimension – therefore occurs by means of *composition*. Composition is viewed here as a formal gain in value that results from the quality of the disposition of the forms in themselves, irrespective of both functional aspects and the material characteristics of architectural artifacts – which, in the context of classicist architecture (taking Plato as a reference) is designated as *idea*.

To look at the "self-sufficiency of the model as a work" as an indication of approximation to the conceptual universe is therefore equivocal: Eisenman belittles the object in a *material* sense, but not in a *formal* sense.

Eisenman's syntactic research can be seen as a conceptualising version of the so-called "composition studies". Eisenman does not move away from conceptual territory just because his presence is felt in his works as an author, due to a subjective manipulation of the form. What takes him furthest away from conceptual art is the actual fact that his research is formal and that, in a diametrically opposite direction to conceptual art, it identifies the *locus* of the artistic dimension of architecture in the manipulation of the form, that is, in sculpturing the artifact. Aware of this difference, he writes:

> The fundamental difference between art and architecture is that the idea of architecture demands the idea of an object presence, while the idea of art does not. In one sense, conceptual art is a model never to be realized in a final object, and therefore, it is perhaps possible to approximate a true conceptual state. The idea that physical objects can be rendered entirely conceptual should not be at issue. Nor should the idea that to be conceptual in art and architecture the work must remain in an idea state. What is at issue and what most conceptual art fails to take into account is that the physical reality itself does have a conceptual aspect.[437]

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[435] *Ibidem*, p. 17.
[436] Eisenman writes: ' (...) the distinction between building and architecture depends on the presence in the latter of a "sign of architecture". Peter Eisenman, "Misreading Peter Eisenman", p. 215.
[437] Eisenman, "Notes on Conceptual Architecture", p. 15.

Eisenman knows that "conceptualising the *form*" is not what conceptual art does. That is what he himself wishes to do in architecture.

This conceptualisation of form proposed by Eisenman therefore promotes an extremely partial emptying of the work[438]. Eisenman reduces the functional aspects to notations, but does not do so with formal aspects. He does not empty the form in a manner that is itself a notation. Using form to think about architecture implies emptying it – removing content and reducing it to a generic sample of "form" or "formal rule" – a circumstance into which it can be integrated in a self-reflexive "discourse" (And this is also the reason why *Houses of Cards* do not appear to be serial processes. In serial works, the composition is reduced to a mechanical result and, to that extent, form is reduced to something merely schematic.)

"Privileging composition as a fundamental factor of contemplation of the work" is, in itself, rendering the form substantial. But, in addition to this, form therefore becomes the vehicle for other substances. Firstly, to the extent that its manipulation is subjective, the form has authorial *substance*. Then, Eisenman's research, by giving continuity to the aesthetic classical tradition, also implies historical substance. It is a fact that Eisenman does not resort to the code of classical architecture (and instead desemanticises the forms). However, it approaches the classical root of architecture in as far as it follows the tradition of *composition* (just like Le Corbusier). In this sense, the definition of a syntax of architectural forms, ambitioned by Eisenman, could be seen as "the last of the treatises" about architectural form – the one that would focus directly on the *conceptual* base inherent to the composition. Finally, this classical affiliation also implies its underlying humanism – a fact which, as I have mentioned, Eisenman would acknowledge.

The syntax that Eisenman intends to isolate is, therefore, retroactive rather than self-reflexive. It serves principally to synthesise one of the ways that architectural forms have been viewed, rather than using forms to think about architecture.

Language, understood in its general sense, is the order of the day when conceptual art arises and develops and when Eisenman builds his idea of a "syntactic architecture". Language, or linguistics, marked *Zeitgeist*. However, there is a great difference between what happens in conceptual art and in architecture. I refer to how, in each of the areas, a relationship between language and form is established.

One of the most mentioned aspects of conceptual art is its relationship with language. I have already referred to this theme here. I believe that in art, recourse to language serves particularly to create an opposition to the autonomy of form. Instead of "forms" (in the sense of entities with plastic value), words are offered. Or, instead of producing forms in an expressionist manner, enunciations are produced – which are discoursive entities verbalised, or not, by the author. None of this happens in architecture. When, during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, concerns with language gain prominence in architecture, the preponderance

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[438] I diverge from the perspective that Tafuri sets forth in his essential essay "L'Architecture dans le Boudoir: The Language of Criticism and the Criticism of Language" (*L'Architecture dans le Boudoir*. A Linguagem da Crítica e a Crítica da Linguagem), from 1974. Tafuri states: "Today (...), a highly specialized analysis of an architecture, strongly characterized by linguistic sense, can have only one result – tautology." Tafuri, "L'Architecture dans le Boudoir", p. 307.

of form is not brought into question. On the other hand, "form seen as language" becomes the central factor for examining architectural artifacts, to the extent that they serve as the basis for the construction of a given hypothesis of disciplinary autonomy.

Now, I shall examine the type of emptying of the work promoted by Fujii. In his projects, form generating procedures are based on geometrical logic, as is the case with *Houses of Cards*. However, in contrast to what occurs in Eisenman's houses, geometry is used strictly – a strategy that goes towards the emptying of the subjective dimension of the form.

I propose to start off examining a text about Fujii's work written by John Whiteman – "Between Reason and Experience: The Words and Works of Hiromi Fujii". It dates from 1987. Whiteman proposes to divide Fujii's work into three distinct stages. The first of these stages is essentially destructive with respect to the common acceptation of the meaning of architectural forms and, according to Whiteman, it is characterised by Fujii's

> application of an all-pervasive grid to neutralize his buildings. The effacement of meaning which he sought was to be achieved (in a process which he called "catabolism" or "destructive metabolism") by the rhetorical device of repetition. For Fujii, only the formal strategy of repetition could produce multitiered structures, distancing, and divergence – structures which could escape the canonical grasp of ordinary expectation and desire.[439]

Described in this way, Fujii's projects seem in fact to follow an emptying of the work, by eliminating the significance of forms. However, nowadays it is difficult to associate these intentions – supposedly destructive – with a project such as *Miyajima House* – the example that Whiteman evokes to illustrate this stage of Fujii's production. The practically blind outer walls of the house, characterised entirely by its square-line modulation, could suggest an emptying of the significance of form – that is how Whiteman sees them. But, in fact, the composition has a classical flavour. The group of masses which (apparently) constitute the volume of the house is, roughly, organised according to a dual symmetry. (I say "roughly" because the *symmetrically* arranged masses have slightly different lengths from one side to the other along the axes of symmetry.) In classical tradition, the central sections of buildings are emphasised through their prominence, while at *Miyajima House* the axes of symmetry are marked by recesses, as if they had originated breaches in the volume; but the geometry of this project is nonetheless governed by classical rules of composition. In fact, also in classical manner, one of the transversal slits is occupied by a staircase that leads to an entrance into what could be considered a *piano nobile*.

I believe that the most appropriate projects to exemplify the work's emptying of meaning, promoted by Fujii, are those that Whiteman considers to belong to the second stage of production. Departing from

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[439] John Whiteman, "Between Reason and Experience: The Words and Works of Hiromi Fujii", in Kenneth Frampton (ed.), *The Architecture of Hiromi Fujii*, New York: Rizzoli, 1987, p. 15.

traditional principles of composition such as symmetry, Fujii starts to use other principles, which are more economic, or innocuous, such as serial repetition. In order to define the form of the buildings, Fujii creates simple formal systems and uses them in a summary manner. The form is not only systematised (circumscribed to a set of rules which constitute the system itself), but also have a minimum constitution (resulting from the simplicity of the system and of the manipulation). It is this simplicity which permits both the system and it's manipulation to become clearly comprehensible.

Geometry is not put at the service of composition but, rather, it is used strictly to the extent necessary to make reference to itself. Geometry tens to operate as a notation for the existence of geometry rather than as an instrument for the production of formal complexity. As is typical of conceptual art, resources are reduced to a minimal manifestation of themselves, in the sense that they become a theme (mentioned merely as a notation), instead of a means to an end (a circumstance where the result overlays the resource). Geometry is used only to the extent that it represents geometry in general.

Reduced to a notation, geometry expresses its tautological nature. It says nothing. It is limited to exposing its own logic, or revealing itself as a component of thought about architectural space. The self-reflexive scope of this strategy is evident. As Fujii explains in "Quintessential Architecture and Suspended Form",

> Geometry does not concern itself with space as such. It represents the corollary of the logical composition of axioms, not derivatives of actual space. (...) It may serve to elucidate the structure of actual space but has no tale to tell about it. (...) Like language and mathematics, geometry provides a set of principles but does not commit itself to reality. It is, in other words, completely hollow.[440]

The various works that Bochner calls *Measurement Room* [123] could be understood as an illustration of these thoughts of Fujii's. Bochner superimposes graphical elements, which reveal an abstract understanding of that space, over the architectural elements that define the space of a gallery and, in doing so, exposes precisely the divergence between reality on the one hand and, on the other, an abstract system of analysis and representation. As Bochner says, "The measurements [laid all over the rooms] project a mental construct of the space onto the space itself". It is also an opposition of this type that Fujii enunciates in the above extract. He refers to geometry as an operative universe that does not encounter the empirical dimension of things and instead constitutes its own – tautological – logic.

In his work as a project designer, Fujii experiments with the production of space starting off from geometrical rules. Similarly to Eisenman, he uses the abstract system as a catalyst for the definition of form. He suspends the empirical dimension of the project and abandons it to the generative potential of geometry. As I stated in chapter I.2, the procedures performed by Fujii end up being slightly contaminated by

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[440] Whiteman, "Between Reason and Experience", pp. 15-16 [published in: *The Japan Architect* (November / December 1980), p. 26.

requirements of a functional nature. However, the underlying procedural paradigm is: the generative logic of forms is geometrical.

The operative universe of geometry intersects with the operative universe of architecture, more so than with that of art. Art is created in many ways that have nothing to do with geometry, while we seldom find architecture whose conception does not involve geometric representation. However, geometry may simply be transposed to the artistic context and thus acquire the status of art, whereas the dislocation of geometry to the context of architecture doesn't make it architecture. Geometry can be art, but it cannot be architecture. Geometry can only become architecture when it is not destined just to be *observed* (as can happen in art), but is also *inhabited*. The buildings by Fujii I have mentioned are not sculptures. As I said, the repeated elements that constitute them possess the dimensions necessary to become habitable. It is this functional aptitude that defines them as architecture.

From this statement we can see, once again, that any idea of "autonomy of architecture" – understood as a factor or set of factors that define its specificity – is more closely related to function that form. However, that is not the type of essence Fujii (as Eisenman) is looking for. The essence sought by Fujii pertains to the *construction of meanings*, understood as the interrelation which is established between the forms presented by a project and the assumptions carried by whoever observes them, in other words, between "the entities that signify" and "the framework of references of whoever produces the significations" (cultural background). Fujii gives geometry the role of generator of form precisely because it allows him to escape the universe of meanings that arise from function as well as the universe of symbolic meanings (referring to things external to architecture) or self-referencing (with the "codes" of architecture as their basis). In this way, a hiatus is created between what the work presents – a summary expression of geometrical logic – and what is expected to be the meaning in architecture.

Fujii never refuses the problem of meaning. It is around it that his work is developed; and it is in order to tackle it that he uses geometry, whose tautological nature is, at the outset, contrary to the production of meanings. There is no contradiction to be found here. It is precisely the opposition between the tautology of geometry (adopted in order to generate the form) and the empiricism characteristic to architecture that Fujii uses to subject the production of meaning to self-reflection. And what is the result? From my point of view, Fujii's work precisely demonstrates that the dislocation of tautological forms to the empirical scope of architecture suppresses tautology. Forms which, themselves, or in contexts external to architecture (namely in art) could be tautological, become significant due to the use that is given to them in architecture. The attribution of *function* simultaneously constitutes an attribution of *meaning*. It could be argued that, similarly to art, tautology does not include the meaning of the work and that it is simply a starting point to build that meaning (art is not to be confused with mathematics, for example); and that, therefore, the impossibility of tautology is not a characteristic of architecture. This is true. But in art, tautology of form is a fact even before meanings are built from there – a fact that is evident through the

reaction of anyone who expects art not to be tautological and is therefore disappointed by the tautology. This does not occur in architecture. From the outset, the view on form is filtered by the characteristics of the spaces that render them inhabitable.

On the other hand, in architecture, forms acquire meanings that do not derive from the functional specificity of spaces (the assignment of a specific use to a determined space), but only from the generic fact that the spaces are inhabitable (the general characteristics of a certain space make that space generally inhabitable). That is what happens, for example, when Fujii repeats the same forms, subjecting them to progressive reductions or increases in scale in a manner similar to *Matryoshka dolls*. Firstly, the progressive contrasts in scale, from "large" to "small" suggest the universe of gigantism and miniaturisation – an effect which becomes particularly evident due to the fact that, *in architecture*, the body serves as reference for dimensions. (This reading does not arise, for example, from the geometrical sculptures of LeWitt.) Secondly, additionally, the progressive levels of interiority can be put down to affective dichotomies such as "surrounding / surrounded" or "protector / protected" – an effect that is related to the container function that *architectural* forms so often perform. In the context of architecture, tautological forms, despite being emptied of compositional subjectivity (to the extent that they are logical), generate empirical meanings. They even generate poetic effects.

In view of these assumptions, I ask: if it is not complete, what function does the "partial emptying" promoted by Fujii perform? What is its self-reflexive scope?

The interpretation I have just proposed for Fujii's projects does not remove them from the realm of the *conceptual*, but it does reveal that the emptying produced therein is relative. The form is empty only until it is observed in the architectural context. Then, it acquires meaning. Fujii therefore manages to expose a mechanism for the construction of meaning that does not depend on a recognisable code. The emptying which, at the outset, characterises form is like a blank piece of paper on which the "mechanism for construction of meaning from the form" becomes clear.

One can compare the mathematical redundancy of LeWitt's sculptures with the tautology of Fujii's geometric forms. Both produce meaning, but in different ways. LeWitt's sculptures produce meaning from the moment that one becomes aware that their imperturbable mathematical logic is a "dead end street". It is necessary to construct a meaning using that logic as an object of reflection. This is not what happens with Fujii's projects. In these, meaning is produced through the insertion of the object generated by logic into a context where it responds to requirements of an empirical nature. It is produced, mainly, through the confrontation between object and context – between geometry and reality – between the *abstract* and the *empirical*. (It is this sense that, as I mentioned, Fujii is closer to Bochner than to LeWitt.)

The emptyness of LeWitt's geometrical sculptures remains intact and has to be observed as such. The emptyness of Fujii's geometrical projects is filled by the meaning that is *superimposed* on them through function and use. It is a support for the filling that gives it meaning – a meaning that emerges in contrast to

the emptyness that serves as its support. Fujii uses the emptyness as an instrument to isolate (and, therefore, emphasise) the mechanisms for construction of the meaning of form in architecture.

Fujii does not promote emptying. He uses it. In fact, works of architecture cannot be emptied. Only its forms can. I believe that this is what Fujii's work demonstrates.

projects whose content is the emptyness itself

The projects by Fujii which I have just mentioned are not those that, in the history of architecture, come closest to emptying the form by means of *repetition*. Fujii does not have projects that result, or seem to result, from a simple process of repetition. They are not as elementary as that. They are marked by manipulations such as, for example, progressions in scale of forms placed one inside the other. In view of this fact, one could ask: doesn't literal repetition produce a more complete emptying of meaning of forms? Isn't this closer to abandoning the form to tautology?

From this perspective, projects other than Fujii's are more radical – those through which the possibility of solving the forms through a *repetitive* configuration summary system is taken to its limit. It is projects of this nature that I will examine next. In this way, I shall move from "*projects that are emptied of content to expose the "mechanism of its own writing"* (to use Tafuri's definition), to *projects whose content is the void itself*. On the other hand, this variation of the theme shall be accompanied by a change in the scale of the project. Fujii operates only at the scale of architectural objects – a relatively contained scale. The territorial scale, due to its infinitude, is more propitious for the repetition to be performed until exhaustion and, consequently, becomes more expressive.

I shall take the *Hochhausstadt* project (Skyscraper city[441]) of Ludwig Hilberseimer as a reference and, also, the *No-Stop City* and the *Monumento Continuo* (Continuous Monument), authored by the Italian collectives Archizoom Associati and Superstudio, respectively. I shall analyse all three, but will build my argument mainly around *Hochhausstadt*. Despite being unusual, the *Hochhausstadt* is in fact intended as a plausible project, while *No-Stop City* and *Monumento Continuo* mainly seek to produce discourse. They are manifests centred around architecture, which have the format of a project, but were not destined to be plausible models for the construction of reality. They do not even generate habitable spaces, at least according to common sense.

Repetition is a common resource for configuration of the architectural form. It is the most immediate way of creating a metric and compositional *order* and, furthermore, results naturally from the mechanical systematisation of construction. (This is not what happens in the Fujii's projects, where the repetition is more a configurative – or *ideographical* – than constructive strategy.) The machine, at least a pre-digital

[441] The project is often called "Vertical city".

machine, produces in series[442]. Understood in this way, repetition is a phenomenon which gains relevance for architecture as the effects of the Industrial Revolution make themselves felt, and reaches an apex of importance for theoretical discourse and practices with the modern movement. Therefore, it does not merely constitute a natural result of new constructive methods based on pre-fabricated elements. To the extent that the projects acquire a self-reflexive dimension, it can also become a *theme* – an object of critical examination. According to several authors[443], this is what occurs in several projects by Hilberseimer and, in particular in his proposal for a *Hochhausstadt* from 1924 [34].

More than just the *design* of a city, the *Hochhausstadt* is a *system* for configuring a city. Hilberseimer creates an urban configuration pattern that is hierarchized almost exclusively according to the difference between the various overlapping strata: offices, commerce, housing and different kinds of circulation routes. So, zones are not functionally differentiated, nor are there variations in how different circulation routes articulate the urban components that configure the layout of the territory, nor even are there exceptional buildings. The city is a homogenous mass that stretches out equally in all directions. The pattern can be repeated indefinitely.

On the other hand, the urban spaces and the buildings are reduced to the most basic set-ups. In as far as concerns the buildings, they are flat, with walls exhaustively marked by invariable rhythms of rectangular windows, vertical (in the highest stratum, dedicated to housing) or horizontal (in the lowest stratum, devoted to work). It could be argued that Hilberseimer produces drawings in which the forms perform a merely exemplificative function, in other words, that the forms which complete the city could be that or any other. I believe that more than the drawings serving as examples (whereby the forms could be different), Hilberseimer determined that the forms (those and not others) should look like illustrative forms. One might speak of an *exemplificative* architecture in the sense that its language is only what is strictly necessary and that that language does not intend, in itself, to say anything – an architecture as literal as the icon-house I mentioned in chapter I-2 – an architecture that is as devoid of "art" as what Hilberseimer proposes, two years before *Hochhausstadt*, in his project for the *Chicago Herald Tribune* building [33]. Finally, one can view the *Hochhausstadt* design as a design reduced to the strict realisation of a *system* and that, by confirming the nature of the system, it is innocuously repetitive. As Manfredo Tafuri states, Hilberseimer reinvents the work of the architect

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[442] Mário Carpo argues precisely that the machine in the digital age means that production is no longer dictated by the rules of "mass production" created by the Industrial Revolution. Carpo, *The Alphabet and the Algorithm*, pp. 1-48.

[443] See: K. Michael Hays, Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject: The Architecture of Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilberseimer, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 1995; Rouillard, *Superarchitecture,* pp. 313-316; Pier Vittorio Aureli, The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture, Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 2011, pp. 13-16; Pier Vittorio Aureli, "More and More About Less and Less: Notes Towards a History of Nonfigurative Architecture", *Log* 16 (Spring / Summer 2009), pp. 7-18. Charles Waldheim, 'Weak Work: Andrea Branzi's "Weak Metropolis" and the Projective Potential of an "Ecological Urbanism"', in Mohsen Mostafavi & Gareth Doherty (eds.), *Ecological Urbanism*, Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2010, p. 118.

> not by presenting "models" for the project but by situating the coordinates and the dimensions of the actual project at the most abstract level possible (...) For Hilberseimer, the "object" is not put into question: it has already disappeared from his horizon of considerations. The only imperative that stands out is that dictated by the laws of the organization (...)[444]

Hilberseimer promotes an emptying of form. He promotes what Dominique Rouillard calls a "figurative retention of architecture"[445]. I would now like to measure what the implications of that emptying are in as far as specifically concerns its self-reflexive scope. For this purpose, I propose to analyse the *Hochhausstadt* proposed by Pier Vittorio Aureli in his recent book *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*.

For Aureli, the forms of *Hochhausstadt* reflect the operation of capitalist societies, based on production and consumption. He specifically refers to "*(...) the compulsion to repeat, which is the essential trait of capitalist civilization.*"[446]. Repetitive forms are those that best serve this system, both because of the manner in which they are produced – itself *repetitive* – or its nature as a support – *flexible* – for a daily life under permanent transformation. The homogeneity that permits all and condenses all, generated by repetition, is the ideal field for capitalist dynamics. In this context, the repetition to be found in architectural forms is related to the logic of a system, which is not only productive but social. Aureli therefore refers to phenomena that are not directly related to the *genesis of the form*, but which characterise the *social context of that genesis*. Aureli observes that, in *Hochhausstadt*,

> architectural form is no longer seen as representation but as process. (...) The city is reduced to its reproductive conditions.[447]

To the extent that the forms of *Hochhausstadt* bring "its reproductive conditions" to light, once could say that they perform a self-reflexive function. Furthermore, Aureli interprets the form, not just as an end, but as a means of providing visibility (he is speaking about forms) to a phenomenon of a non-visual order (the "reproductive conditions") – which places *Hochhausstadt* in the realm of the conceptual.

Aureli uses the term "process". He gives it, however, a meaning different to the meaning I assigned to this term. I propose to continue this discussion by clarifying the contours of that meaning. I do not intend to add new information to the definitions of "process" I have already established but, instead, use them as a reference to characterise the type of self-reflection promoted by projects such as *Hochhausstadt*.

I believe that the meaning Aureli attributes to "process" has a specificity that is apparent at two different levels: (1) what constitutes the process itself, or in other words, the set of phenomena which lead to the definition of the work and that are communicated through it, and (2) the type of communication through which the process is revealed by the work.

I have used the term "process" to mean three different things.

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[444] Manfredo Tafuri, *Projecto e Utopia*, transl. Conceição Jardim & Eduardo Nogueira, Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 1985, pp. 72-74.
[445] Rouillard, *Superarchitecture*, p. 313 [rétention figurative de l'architecture].
[446] Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, p. 41.
[447] *Ibidem*, p. 14.

I have used it mainly with the acceptation that is most specifically connected to the conceptual field. It relates to the set of procedures that a determined author defines in order to obtain the form of a work (as opposed to the direct definition of that form). In this context, a procedural work (1) is determined by a pre-established set of procedures and (2) communicates this set of procedures, in other words, is transparent in relation to it. This is not exactly the process according to Aureli. The portrait that emerges from *Hochhausstadt* is not the result of a perfunctory performance of a set of predetermined procedures, as occurs in the sculptures of LeWitt or, within the scope of the architecture project, in Ferriss' buildings. This is not the result of a conceptual type of process.

A second meaning which I gave the term "process" was taken from the realm of Process art. The process is, in this case, the set of procedures, not of *conception*, but of *execution* of the work, made evident through that work. The procedures of production – extremely specific, handcrafted or mechanical actions – bring about the marks that bear witness to the production and thus serve as *indices*. Although these are procedures of *production* and the productive questions are part of the system portrayed in *Hochhausstadt*, this acceptation of the process does not coincide with Aureli's either. Firstly, Aureli refers to a system with not only productive but also social dimensions. However, even in as far as regards merely productive aspects, he refers to a complex productive system that is not reduced by the project to a concise set of procedures.

Finally, I used the term "process" to refer to the set of procedures to which unstable works are subject after those works have been executed (something very often designated as "work in progress"). Despite Aureli identifying social dynamics as part of the capitalist system, this does not translate into an idea of "architecture in motion" (an idea which is present, for example, in Price's projects).

None of these three definitions of "process" serve, therefore, to explain what Aureli means with the word.

All of them imply a set of procedures – of conception, of production, or of manipulation of form – that is contained within the form itself. The relationship between what is understood as process and the form is literal. It tends towards univocal. The correspondence between the form and the process is so precise that the process, in any of the three acceptations, is legible in form. The form is nothing other than what the process determines or needs. When Aureli states that the architectural form is viewed as a "process", I believe that process stands for a complex operative situation and that it is not synthesised in *Hochhausstadt* according to a set of sufficiently succinct set of procedures to have that univocal relationship with the form. Therefore, the *manner that this situation is communicated through form is not literal*.

To the extent that the "process" does not refer to a set of procedures with a univocal relationship with form, but rather subjectively social and economic procedures – procedures that condition the form but which are *external* to it – the problem of the distance between the work (the signifier) and that which the work reveals (the referent) is raised. This brings us to the second theme I would like to look into with regard

to *Hochhausstadt* – the type of communication that permits phenomena of the non-visual order to emerge through the form.

This is a problem which also occurs in conceptual art or, more precisely, in the more ideological conceptual art – where the theme of the work is also external to the limits of the work and the problem of its form.

In conceptual art this problem is solved through strategies which permit that distance to be lessened. Note, for example, what happens with Michael Asher's intervention at *Claire Copley Gallery*. Asher removes the wall that normally conceals the administrative area from the areas where the art works are shown. The gallery is shown, or revealed as a business. Observing a gallery in its condition as a business, in a certain way, is similar to looking at a city and paying attention to its "reproductive conditions", to use the words of Aureli. In both cases, it is a matter of making social mechanisms subjacent to visible manifestations. However, at *Claire Copley Gallery*, these conditions are not observed *through* the work. They themselves are exposed, in their factuality. Another work that can be considered along these lines is *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of 1 May 1971*, by Hans Haacke. In this case, communication is a little more indirect. It is of *informative* nature. Haacke provides documental data about 142 buildings held by a group of real estate speculators led by Harry Shapolsky [147]. The facts aren't there to be seen but what is there to be seen is an objective exhibition of those facts.

The capitalist system is not as easy to delimit as an art gallery or a real estate group. On the other hand, Hilberseimer does not seek any given phenomenon representing that system, in relation to which it can become literal. Hilberseimer chooses to produce a *summary* and, in order to do so, creates an image. The system it makes visible is not literally shown, nor conveyed through a communication register as factual as pure information, but instead is *represented*.

Apparently, in saying this, I diverge from Aureli's point of view according to which "the architectural form is no longer seen as representation, but instead as a process" – but only apparently. What Aureli identifies in *Hochhausstadt* is a very particular type of summary that is not limited to fixing an image, as seen, for example, in the paradigmatic case of the erection of monuments. Instead of that, the "image" used to summarise the capitalist city (taken, strategically, to its "final consequences") is itself a system. The capitalist city understood as a *system* (a corollary and instrument of the larger *system* known as "capitalism") is summarised in the form of a project which is, it too, a *system*. The representative system is as dynamic as the system being represented.

This is the representative system referred to when Aureli uses the word "process".

In this way, "process" designates the condition of a work which (1) is not defined strictly as a form (form is bureaucratic), but as a device (forms that are laid out in relation to each other in order to create a determined mechanism), (2) has a dynamic performance, similarly to art works designated as "work in progress" and (3) *reflects*, as a dynamic system, a system with an abstract nature (in the specific case of

Hochhausstadt, that of a capitalist city).

It is with this last point that the issue of representation is raised. *Hochhausstadt*, as "process-work", is constituted by a set of forms (something visual) summarily established in order to paradigmatically implement a logic of productive and social operation (something abstract). In this sense, it is included in the scope of conceptual works – works that confer visibility to phenomena that are of a non-visual nature. However, the manner that the passage from "non-visual" to "visual" is produced departs from the scope of conceptual operative strategies. In particular, it departs from literalness. Since it does not have a circumscribed phenomenon as its referent, *the work has to represent. It is not limited to showing what exists, it cannot limit itself to an enunciation, nor is it literal*. It has to be "designed" and it is that design which, *metaphorically*, expresses emptyness – emptness that is purely quantitative. In the works of architecture which *represent* the void, content tends towards "nothing" in that the work becomes a "representative form" (even if representative of that "nothing"), or to put it differently, to the extent that the communication strategy becomes *substantive*. This is foreign to the conceptual universe.

The ideological program identified with *Hochhausstadt* can be related to what was subjacent to the model of the *No-Stop City* by the group Archizoom Associati[448] and, even if more remotely, to the *Monumento Continuo* project by the group Superstudio[449] which both appear approximately fifty years later. On the other hand, these proposals radicalise the emptying of the architectural form, approximating it to literalness – a fact I shall look into.

The *No-Stop City* is a "project" developed progressively between 1968 and 1972, whose general guidelines are published for the first time in 1970[450] and which appears a project only in 1971[451] [35 . 36]. In it, the idea that a homogenous city is flexible and radicalised to the point that urban territory is repeatedly occupied by eight monolithic units, inside which space is summarily conditioned by few structural elements (pillars) and infrastructural elements (elevators, air conditioning, sanitary installations). This is the basis for occupation intended to be under constant transformation and marked principally by the presence of furniture and objects laid out freely in a closed space without natural light and with air conditioning – an occupation similar to that of an exhibition floor in IKEA stores where rooms of homes and offices are displayed.

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[448] The group Archizoom Associati, founded in 1966, is composed of Andrea Branzi, Dario and Lucia Bartolini, Gilberto Corretti, Massimo Morozzi and Paolo Deganello.

[449] The group Superstudio, formed in 1966, is composed of Adolfo Natalini, Cristiano Toraldo di Francia, Roberto Magris, Gian Piero Frassinelli, Alessandro Magris and Alessandro Poli.

[450] Archizoom Associati, "Città, Catena di Montaggio del Sociale: Ideologia e Teoria della Metropoli", *Casabella* 350-351 (July-August 1970).

[451] Archizoom Associati, "No-Stop City: Residential Parkings, Climatic Universal System", in Andrea Branzi, *No-Stop City: Archizoom Associati*, transl. Émilie Gourdet, Simon Pleasance & Étienne Schelstraete, Orléans: HYX, 2006, pp. 176-179 [originally published in *Domus* 496 (March 1971)].

In this way, the group Archizoom intends to create a city that is radically adequate to the current social system and, at the same time, can grant visibility to the operation of that system. For this purpose, in the theoretical approach to the "project" in 1970, the group explains that:

> (...) we use a classical written language, and a graphic language, more specific to our discipline. The former provides us with well-proven analytical tools; the latter enables us to make a creative formulation of the results of the process itself. In this case, however, creativity is merely represented by the use of architectural language at a direct explanatory level, which would otherwise be impossible. In fact, from the moment when the problem of language is that of "Optimal Communication" (that is, the most explicit and general information possible), "it perforce becomes UTOPIA".[452]

The idea of an architecture of "Optimized Communication", where the information is made as explicit and universal as possible, is very close to what I defined here as "literalness". I shall return to this theme later. First, I would like to start by identifying the type of emptying at the service of which literalness is to be found in *No-Stop City*. On this subject, Andrea Branzi, a member of the group, explains in a retrospective text:

> The idea of an inexpressive, catatonic architecture, outcome of the expansive forms of logic of the system and its class antagonists, was the only modern architecture of interest to us: a liberating architecture, corresponding to mass democracy, devoid of demos and devoid of cratos (people and power), and both centreless and imageless. A society freed from its own alienation, emancipated from the rhetorical forms of humanitarian socialism and rhetorical progressivism: an architecture which took a fearless look at the logic of grey, atheistic and de-dramatized industrialism, where mass production produced infinite urban décors (...). The colourful visions of Pop architecture were replaced by Ludwig Hilberseimer's pitiless urban images, those of a city without qualities designed for people without preordained qualities. (...) the limits of the system lay in the new conditions related to knowledge and project, the zero project from which everything was possible (and unpredictable).[453]

In *No-Stop City*, as in *Hochhausstadt*, form is emptied of any autonomous value and put at the service of the revelation of a social system (a fact which, in this case, is made clear by the authors themselves). The *No-Stop City* is a "status report" regarding the operation of the late-capitalist society, whose logic is taken to its limit so that, in this way, a "zero project" can be created. It is a *raw* portrait, as eloquently raw as possible according to an operative rationale. Precisely for that reason, *it resorts to literalness* and uses it as a manner of stripping architecture of assumptions that are imposed by history through common sense. (It is this strategy which, because it is so radicalised, leads to spaces not being quite inhabitable.)

For its turn, *Monumento Continuo* is principally an image or, more precisely, a set of images produced between 1969 and 1970 [38]. (Rouillard refers to an "excessive iconicity"[454].) It is a large-scale orthogonal construction, whose invariable modulation is marked by a grid of black lines on a white background, stretching through the multiple landscapes of the world, regardless of geographical specificities. Similarly to a work of *land art*, the *Monumento Continuo* consists of a pavement here, a wall

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[452] Archizoom Associati, "City, Assembly Line of Social Issues: Ideology and Theory of the Metropolis", in Branzi, *No-Stop City*, p. 157.
[453] Andrea Branzi, "Postface", in *No-Stop City*, pp. 148-149.
[454] Rouillard, *Superarchitecture*, p. 360 [excessive iconocité].

there, a portico structure, etc., but always maintaining the monumentality and the repetitiveness of the grid. It is an artifact that manifests nothing other than the exhaustive orthogonal and monumental features of its presence in the landscape. With it, Superstudio intends to anticipate

> (...) a near future in which all architecture will be created with a single act, from a single design capable of clarifying once and for all the motives which have induced man to build dolmens, menhirs, pyramids, and lastly to trace (*ultima ratio*) a white line in the desert. (...) Eliminating mirages and will-o'-the-wisps such as spontaneous architecture, sensitive architecture, architecture without architects, biological architecture and fantastic architecture, we move towards the "continuous monument": a form of architecture all equally emerging from a single continuous environment: the world rendered uniform by technology, culture and all the other inevitable forms of imperialism.[455]

Just like *No-Stop City*, the *Monumento Continuo* does not seek to create supports for daily life, but is designed as a manifest about the course of history. Its format is close to the projects that try to constructively imagine the future but, in truth, it is sceptical. It is based on radical obedience to what the group considers "inevitable forms of imperialism".

There is a substantial difference between the historical context of Hilberseimer's *Hochhausstadt* project and that of the dystopias of the Italian collectives Archizoom Associati and Superstudio but, despite this fact, there is common ground in the type of relationship they establish between the repetitive nature of the forms and the departure towards the quantitative logic of mass production. It is through the reduction of form to a "matter of quantity" put forwards in the three proposals, that the void and its consequent self-reflexive implications are produced. In distinct manners, all of them take the capitalist system – and the principles of *modern architecture* that best serve it – to the limit.

Since I am examining the emptying of the work, I propose to compare them regardless of their function as "projects" and their respective historical contexts. More specifically, I propose to describe how, in *No-Stop City* and in *Monumento Continuo*, the emptying advocated by the *Hochhausstadt* is taken to the limit.

I believe that the strategies of the Italian proposals move in opposite directions.

It is very significant that the group Archizoom should consider the emptying of architectural language, or its subordination to a strictly informative function, as a utopia. The conjugation of the possibilities that:

(1) the work is literal in relation to the operative universe in which it was conceived and

(2) that universe is the universe of the social system (namely economic) in which architectural practice takes place,

brings about a *conjuncture of project* that can be considered utopian. This comes very close to the *administrative* operativity typical to conceptual art. The work is the object of administrative proceedings and

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[455] Peter Lang & William Menking, *Superstudio: Life without Objects*, Milano: Skira, 2003, p. 122.

its function, as an entity that can be perceived as art, is to provide expression to those procedures. In the case of the *No-Stop City*, more than just procedures, the work gives expression to a universe of procedures. And it is more radical than *Hochhausstadt*. It is less objectual. Its language is closer to the abstract language of administrative procedures themselves. The paradigm that it pursues is architecture which is a diagram, whose variations of form correspond to the variations of a set of data. In the text "Città, Catena di Montaggio del Sociale" (City, Assembly Line for the Social), the group explains that, in *No-Stop City*,

> (...) the Metropolis objectively becomes a Quantitative Category, image-free, i.e. devoid of "its own ideology", a rational system that comes into being in Capital and therein acquires the consciousness of a specific Theory.[456]

In *No-Stop City*, there is a proposal for an architecture that dilutes into the purely abstract universe of information that governs production and consumption. It is in this sense that the group asserts:

> The ultimate goal of modern Architecture is the "elimination" of architecture itself (...).[457]

If *No-Stop City* claims to eliminate any autonomy of form in favour of an "architecture of quantification" (seen as a utopia), in contrast *Monumento Continuo* by Superstudio is above all a form. The emptying produced is primarily related to function – which is not part of the discourse that justifies it. It is through that indifference that, in *Monumento Continuo*, architecture is reduced to a single intervention, fully marked by gridded modulation. It is reduced to the extension of that grid, whose repetitive nature is only disturbed by the variations in volumetry evocative of the archetypes of monumentality (porticos, city walls, courts, etc.).

I believe that *Monumento Continuo* can be considered as a "work that is literal in relation to the operative universe in which it was conceived" – a category I established in chapter I-2, in relation to the literalness of works of architecture. It is the direct reflex of a system of configuration of the architectural form – modular, orthogonal and exhaustively repetitive. But it is much more than that. It is a proposal for using a single system to perform *all* architecture. It does not reflect *a sole* operative universe; it proposes to enclose the question of operative universes, or of configuration, presenting a definitive solution for that purpose. In this sense, the modulation of white squares or cubes, delimited with black lines, also becomes the basis for the conception of a series of pieces of furniture that Superstudio develops between 1969 and 1972 [40 . 41]. Similarly to some of the works of Jean Pierre Raynaud (and, in particular, in his own house [37]), a world is created in which everything results from the addition of the same piece, as if it were a simplified and colourless *Lego* building block. It is that Lego which, installed in the landscape like a work of land art, constitutes the ultimate possibility of architecture presented in *Monumento Continuo*.

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[456] Archizoom Associati, "City, Assembly Line of Social Issues", p. 174.
[457] *Ibidem*, p. 170.

As opposed to what occurs in *No-Stop City*, architecture does not tend to become diluted in *Monumento Continuo*, but rather it refines itself. "Architecture as an object" is not contradicted. Instead, although simplified, the form responds to the most formal of architectural impulses – monumentality.

Taking *Hochhausstadt* as a reference, the *No-Stop City* moves towards suppressing the problem of form, turning it into a device at the service of social dynamics of production and consumption, while *Monumento Continuo* moves towards suppressing the problem of form by solving it definitively with an elementary, archetypical and ecumenical system. In short, while in *No-Stop City* there is an attempt to empty architecture of form, in *Monumento Continuo* it is the form that allows the creation of an image of essential architecture, whereby the emptying relates to what becomes absent in the image of that essentialness (namely the elements usually associated to the fact that architecture fulfils a function).

In view of the characteristics of these three "projects" it is clear that the void produced in them does not correspond to an attempt to efface *content*. The emptied form (repetitive, or bureaucratic) results from the construction of an *ideological* meaning.

While Eisenman and Fujii empty the form of meaning in order to produce a discourse on the form (summarising essential principals for its manipulation or its signification), in these "projects" form is emptied in order to produce a discourse regarding a social system – a discourse filled to the brim of ideological meanings.

In *Hochhausstadt*, in *No-Stop City* and in *Monumento Continuo*, the emptying of the form therefore doesn't make it *self-referential*. Instead of that, in being emptied, the form reveals their *instrumental* nature. The "instrumental vocation of the form within a system" is radicalised to the point that both the vocation and, consequently, the system of which it is an instrument are revealed. *Far from using emptying as a strategy to summarise a "definition of architecture as an autonomous field", Hilberseimer, the Archizoom and Superstudio collectives exposes the discipline's dependence on political factors*.

projects that tend to be, not *tautological*, but *redundant*, in relation to the context to which they belong

In a text published in 1987 – "Tendenza: Neorracionalismo y Figuración"[458] [Neo-rationalism and Figuration] – Ignasi de Solà-Morales uses conceptual art as a reference in order to discuss architecture. He establishes a connection between this artistic category and neo-rationalism. This is an unusual relationship. Solà-Morales takes conceptual art as a reference, taking into account mainly its self-reflexive mission and the reduction of means (scientific means of operation and elementary formal resources) through which this

[458] Ignasi de Solà-Morales, "Tendenza: Neorracionalismo y Figuración", in *Inscripciones*, Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2003, pp. 227-241 [originally published in *AD* vol. 54, 5-6 (1984), pp. 15-20 and in AAVV, *Más allá del Posmoderno: Crítica a la Arquitectura Reciente*, Ciudad de México: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 1986].

mission is performed. These are aspects that he discovers in neo-rationalism also, which is why he establishes this analogy. In as far as concerns the argument I am developing here, I would like to start off by focusing on a specific aspect of neo-rationalism mentioned by Solà-Morales – the attempt to make a work redundant in relation to its intervention context. It is especially there that the text of Solà-Morales addresses the issue of emptying the work. After examining this aspect, I shall then reach a conclusion about the self-reflexive nature of neo-rationalism and, more specifically, about how "redundancy regarding the context" – viewed as a strategy for emptying the work – may establish the conditions necessary for self-reflection.

Solà-Morales starts off by placing neo-rationalism within a framework of ideological review of Italian society in its entirety, going on to describe it as an attempt to refound architecture within that framework. As the very name suggests, neo-rationalism advocates a return to reason. It promotes the return to a basis of objectivity from which the operating models of architecture should be rethought *ab initio*. In this way, it seeks to oppose the arbitrariness that arises due to market rules as well as from acts of authorship. He seeks to oppose the mannerisms that brighten up buildings as if they were consumer products, and the authorial fancies that architects use to try and make their works stand out. In either case, it is a matter of establishing an ethics of formal austerity. It is a matter of removing layers of signification that are considered superfluous from architecture, in favour of a certain essentialness – a strategy that can be identified as a "substantive emptying of the project".

Solà-Morales explains that, whether a question of analysing architecture (within the scope of history), or a question of production (within the scope of the project), neo-rationalism is rooted in considering the *physical* context of projects – a particular type of consideration of context that he associates with two techniques.

Firstly, Solà-Morales mentions topography and cartography jointly. He describes them as representation techniques which permit dealing with objective real-world data regarding, respectively, the physical support on which architecture is based and the disposition of the architectural interventions performed on that support. Cartography becomes relevant to the extent that it relates to *groups* of interventions and that those sets are articulated according to roads, outlines, the shape of public spaces, etc. In this sense, the city is a privileged object of cartographical analysis.

Topography and cartography fit into the same outlook on works of architecture: they both focus on the form. Specifically discussing the analysis of urban environments, Solà-Morales states that

> the morphological analysis of the city and its architecture cannot be explained using any conditions other than its own form. No reference to the "lives" of its inhabitants, to "society", to "styles" or the cultures that cannot be materially translated and described through the instruments for the analysis of topographical and cartographical representation is necessary.[459]

[459] *Ibidem*, p. 234 [El análisis morfológico de la ciudad y su arquitectura no se explica desde otras condiciones que no sean las de su

Architecture is reduced to what can be objectively transported, from the *form* of reality to the *form* of representation.

Secondly, Solà-Morales refers to *typology*[460]. In order to characterise it, he uses what is defined by Aldo Rossi within the scope of his theoretical production as a reference. Solà-Morales explains:

> Through the notion of type, curiously taken from the formalist academic tradition, Aldo Rossi finds a way of describing architecture in as far as concerns its physical conditions and through descriptive notions that do not imply subjection to "idealist" concepts such as style and character. Building types are formal constants according to which all buildings throughout time and irrespective of location can be classified, recognized and described. They are formal notions that act as a container in order to reduce the complexity of architectural objects to their most relevant physical data. The structural comprehension of the architectural form, within the notion of type, finds a system with which it is possible to describe the rationale of the processes of architectural form, and which permits their differences to be confronted from within the interior of repertoires where architecture is analysed using its own constituent data.[461]

Similarly to topography and cartography, typology focuses on form. What distinguishes typology is that, within its scope, forms are kept to their structural essence and, therefore, it constitutes a more abstract data processing system. If in topography and cartography, rigor relates to accurately representing the reality described (within a universe of graphical conventions), the opposite can be said about typological analysis, based on a process of filtering formal data supplied by the objects for analysis, in order to define just the formal structure of those objects.

Up to a point, the typological operativity of the neo-rationalists has similarities with Eisenman's syntactic operativity. Both focus on form and, through the primacy of form, both are defined with the purpose of becoming (1) *universal*, in other words, applicable to all architecture; and (2) *specific* to architecture. Architecture is summarised as a formal issue and therefore its specificity is defined in terms of operativity and as a *discipline*. Or, better put, *architecture is defined as a discipline in the form of an operating model focused on form*.

However, the parallel only goes so far. There is a large difference between these two operating models in as far as concerns the level of self-sufficiency of what, according to each, can be observed in architecture works.

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propia forma. Ninguna referencia es necessaria a la "vida" de sus habitantes, a la "sociedad", a los "estilos" o culturas que no tengan una traducción material reseñable a través de los instrumentos de análisis del dibujo topográfico y cartográfico.].

[460] The term "typology" as it is used here specifically refers to the acceptation of typology specific to neo-rationalism – which is defined by Anthony Vidler as being the "third typology". Anthony Vidler, "The Third Typology", in: K. Michael Hays (ed.), *Oppositions Reader*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998, p. 13-16 [originally published in *Oppositions* 7 (Winter 1976)].

[461] Solà-Morales, "Tendenza", p. 234 [A través de la noción de tipo, curiosamente tomada de la tradición formalista académica, Aldo Rossi encuentra la manera de describir la arquitectura en relación a sus condiciones físicas y a través de nociones descriptivas que no impliquen sujeción a conceptos "idealistas" como los de estilo y carácter. Los tipos edificatorios son invariantes formales con los que la edificación de todo tiempo y lugar puede clasificarse, reconocerse y describirse. Son nociones formales que, a modo de contenedor, reducen la complejidad de los objetos arquitectónicos a sus datos más sobresalientes. La comprensión estructural de la forma arquitectónica encuentra, en la noción de tipo, un sistema con el que describir la lógica de los procesos de la forma arquitectónica, y permite confrontar sus diferencias desde el interior de unos repertorios donde la arquitectura se analiza desde sus propios datos constituyentes.]

Eisenman's syntactic research focuses on form generating processes. In that sense, he focuses on the object itself, seen as an *abstract* entity (such as geometry) and *without context* (other than the context of geometry itself). His objects are self-sufficient entities: they exist in an absolute place.

This is not what occurs with typology. If it is possible to define the formal structure of an object in itself, the circumstance according to which the object is self-sufficient, the "organisation according to families" that permits us to reach the definition of *types* has two implications. Firstly, the establishment of connections between the characteristics of a determined object and the characteristics of a set of objects forces those characteristics to be *relativized*. They are considered, not as something absolute, but as objects in relation to each other – they are compared. Secondly, those characteristics can only be relativized as of the moment in which a certain scope of analysis is defined. Only by delimiting a scope of analysis is it possible to identify variables and non-variables in that specific scope. To sum up, typology needs context. It exists in a place of *dependence*. For this reason also, the city is the privileged context for neo-rationalist operativity.

To the extent that the work is determined through analogy regarding the works that belong to the intervention context, the possibility of this *dissolution into context* being a strategy of emptying the work may be raised. Instead of the form of the work being defined by the author, it is determined by factors external to authorship, emptying the work of its authorial subjectivity or making it the result of a set of perfunctory procedures. Architecture projects are very frequently conceived for a specific location, for which reason this strategy would be extremely suited to them and would position neo-rationalist works very close to conceptual art.

I have raised this question because I believe it is plausible, but I do not think that it is the case. In order to discuss it, I propose to deal with two aspects, separately: (1) the nature of the data that sustains typological procedures, or that are to be found in the "type", and (2) the nature of the role performed by the author in this operative context. These two themes will permit me to identify the limits of self-reflexivity in neo-rationalist practices.

By accounting for the invariable formal structures of architecture within a certain scope (that is, of the *types*), typological analysis allows an examination of architectural identity in that scope, understood as an "essence" that was capable of resisting the passage of time. These lasting formal structures are not only part of the constructive tradition but also a global identity of this scope of analysis. In contrast to Eisenman's operative syntactics (applicable to an analysis of objects of the past, but not expressly intended for that purpose), typological operativity is based on a contextualist analysis whose mission is completed with the fact that, in its results, an "identity instructed by history" can be found. In neo-rationalism, the comprehension of the field of analysis is achieved through instruments that, to the extent that they seek to build a rationale though evidences that survived the ages (and *strictly* to that extent), are specific to history of architecture.

The best-known text in which this cultural dimension of building types is considered and defended is *L'Architettura della Città* (*The Architecture of the City*) by Rossi[462]. Rossi starts with the assumption that, to the extent that buildings permit different functions throughout their existence, in their context the types have a kind of "absolute functional validity" that overlaps the functional specificity that may have been at the source of each building[463]. This is a fact which can be confirmed, for example, in the conversion of convents into schools, or palaces into the headquarters of public agencies (phenomena which I have already mentioned in relation to the possibility of the process being unconnected to functional aspects). On the other hand, to the extent that the types allow the establishment of continuity between the form of constructions of the past and forms proposed in a new project for the same context, they also perform an affective mission: they permit the identification of a community with its architectural tradition. I shall not discuss the validity of this purpose here. With regard to the argument at hand, it is most important that this intention should confirm that, in accordance to neo-rationalist theory, the types, in their condition of formal structure, enclose the empirical dimension of architecture within themselves. For Rossi, the empirical requirements of architecture – whether functional or affective – are condensed in the actual type, in other words, in the formal structure of the works. The form agglomerates, or summarises, the empirical dimension of architecture.

In the type, Anthony Vidler identifies yet another empirical dimension – a political dimension. According to Vidler, the type acquires capacity for political significance in as far as it implies the scale of the *city*. He writes:

> The distinguishing characteristic of the new ontology beyond the specifically formal aspect is that the city (...) is and always has been political in its essence. (...) When a series of typical forms are selected from the past of a city, they do not come, however dismembered, deprived of their original political and social meaning. The original sense of the form, the layers of accrued implication deposited by time and human experience cannot be lightly brushed away; and certainly it is not the intention of the Rationalists to disinfect their types in this way.[464]

For neo-rationalists, even meanings arising from the political history of cities can be enclosed in an entity as formal as the type.

In view of this data, it is clear that typology does not produce – rather, *does not aim to produce* – an emptying of the work. Through a first approach, the typology may appear to be a purely formal operative territory, emptied of empirical aspects. However, as I have just mentioned, that departure from empirical aspects of architecture occurs only within the scope of typological *procedures* and not within the scope of its reason for existence or its consequences. The proceedings are purely formal but the objectives they meet, in

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[462] Aldo Rossi, *La Arquitectura de la Ciudad*, trans. Josep Maria Ferrer-Ferrer & Salvador Tarragó Cid, Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 8th ed., 1992.
[463] See: *Ibidem*, pp. 81-84.
[464] Vidler, "The Third Typology", p. 15.

contrast, are of empirical nature (they are, namely, functional, affective and political). To that extent, neo-rationalist operativity does not seek any sort of emptying of the work. It is *substantive*. It seeks only a synthesis.

Its scientific profile is therefore quite particular. Typological processes are universal to the extent that they can be applied to any object of research – to any geographical field – but this universality is totally different to the universality of fields such as mathematics or geometry, which are used in art and architecture as a means to exclude the "thematic content" of the work and reach a tautological void. It is a universality that seeks not only the particularity of results but also, by means of that particularity, the conservation of something as "typical" as local historical identities.

In view of this fact, I believe that the self-reflexive scope of typological reasoning should be questioned.

As an instrument for analysis, typology tends to be some kind of "science of architectural *tradition*". Rather than speculating about what is understood as "architecture", it proposes a definition of what is architectural by means of a *retroactive* operation – even more retroactive than Eisenman's. While Eisenman attempts a timeless definition of architecture, neo-rationalists propose a more historicist definition. They are distinct from the historicists, however, mainly in that instead of figurative formal data (style), they obtain abstract formal data (type) from the past.

As a design tool, typology raises a problem of a different order, related to authorship.

What I have described until this point may suggest that the typological project is no more than a deductive process performed according to the results of the analysis of a determined context. Using that data, one would deduce a form that would repeat existent types and, in this way, would guarantee it was *typologically* adequate in the context. In view of this framework, it could be argued that, if typology aims to institute a *method*, it is contrary to speculation and, therefore, does not have a self-reflexive scope. The appeasement of "making" through some sort of refuge for methodological doctrine is contrary to the destabilisation through which self-reflection operates. However, if this critique can be made to the typological project viewed *as a paradigm*, problems are raised as the possibility of implementing that paradigm. It is not immediate. On this matter, I propose to return to the text of Solà-Morales, who describes this problem as follows:

> (...) the analysis itself offers nothing other than a clear and organized description according to dominant criteria, though these cannot in any way be taken as determinations of the project to be made.
> Though unwilling to confess it, when the moment of the project arrives neo-rationalism is faced with the need to jump into the void, a moment of invention that requires both a determining ability that analytical work does not provide and a certain degree of intentionality that can't be found in the materiality of urban facts and typologies.[465]

[465] Solà-Morales, "Tendenza", p. 235 [(...) el análisis en sí mismo no ofrece otra cosa que la ordenada y clara descripción en función de unos criterios dominantes pero sin que estos puedan, de ninguna manera, tomarse como determinaciones del proyecto a realizar. Con

The configuration of the project cannot be deduced from the typological equation in a *perfunctory* manner. The typology generates a matrix for the project, but does not produce it. I have discussed the difficulties that are raised by the possibility of an architecture project possessing a tautological form. In as far as regards typology, those difficulties do not even arise. Typology does not have a genetic proclivity.

Solà-Morales identifies two ways to overcome this problem in the history of neo-rationalist practices. In each of these, the issue of authorship is stressed in a certain manner. At one end, Rossi vindicates a declaredly autobiographical character, even surrealist, for the configuration of the project stage. In this way, a disjunction is created between what tends to be objective (the scientific rigour of typological analysis) and what is purely subjective (the expression of authorial idiosyncrasy). (This disjunction does not arise in Eisenman's houses because, since the syntactic system can be generative, it admits the inclusion of the subject in its manipulation.) At the other extreme, Giorgio Grassi seeks rational justifications for the definition of the form until reaching the final project. He uses anonymous forms of architecture provided by the context and the respective constructive reasoning. Completing the contextualist logic that is particular to neo-rationalism, Grassi advances, from the inscription of *form* in the traditional typology of the context of intervention, to the chameleonic dissolution of *form* in that context. He attempts to reach the *redundancy* of form in relation to context.

It may seem that Grassi approaches a conceptual strategy to the extent that he seems to adopt "what already exists" as a work. However, his procedure is not literal. It is not as clear, for example, as the readymade. "Adopting what already exists or what is already there" operates merely as a paradigm – a reference for a practice which, in fact, is actually developed in a territory of "*intuitive* approximation to form through *drawing*".

This is alien to the conceptual scope.

Firstly, conceptual ideas are discoursive and not formal. Even typological analysis, despite being abstractive (because it describes *forms* merely as *formal structures*), does not bring the form to a discoursive territory. Typology does not operate at the level of enunciations. However objective and systematic it may be, it operates at the strict level of *drawing*, that is, the representation of form. From this perspective, typology is very close to Eisenman's syntax.

Grassi writes about the use of drawing:

> (...) architecture is something absolutely concrete, always affirmative, without room for ambiguity; therefore, when it is converted into necessary transit, its means of classical representation has always been, and will continue to be the constructive drawing, the technical drawing. And this is why I make an effort not to leave any level of autonomy to the drawing itself (...).[466]

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temor a confesarlo, el neorracionalismo se encuentra, en el momento del proyecto, con la necesidad de dar un salto en el vacío, un momento de invención para el cual el trabajo analítico carece de capacidad determinante y para el que es necesaria la asunción de una cierta intencionalidad que ya no puede venir dada desde la materialidad de los hechos urbanos y de las tipologías.].

[466] Giorgio Grassi, "Una Opinión sobre el Dibujo", in *La Arquitectura como Oficio y otros Escritos*, transl. Josep Mª Montaner & Jacint Conill, Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1980, p. 191 [(...) la arquitectura es un hecho absolutamente concreto, siempre afirmativo, sin márgenes

Grassi does not use the drawing except as a strict representation of what is real. He does not use it for the lyrical production of forms (which would mean giving autonomy to the *design as a sculpturesque reverie*, in the manner of Álvaro Siza, for example), nor, as he says, for the production of images that are valid in their own right (which would mean giving autonomy to the *design as fiction*, in the manner of Rossi, for example). For Grassi, drawing is objective. It is technical, to use his own words. It is useful in order to organise the material.

To a certain degree, Grassi's drawing is literal. But it is literal in relation to the form of organising the material – an aspect of a formal order. Grassi excludes drawing, in particular, as a diagrammatical approach to project design. He excludes the type of drawing that permits the form to serve as the result of considering non-visual aspects and which comes close to a "discoursive design".

Secondly, due to maintaining the drawing as a fundamental territory for project procedures, even Grassi guarantees a field of authorial subjectivity that is directly manifested through the definition of the form. Despite the representation (the drawing) being objective, the definition of the work (designing through drawing) is maintained within the scope of the subjective. Even within the scope of what "formal ideas" can be, the idea is not precise enough for its realisation to be perfunctory. It is through design – that is, through the actual manipulation of form – that form is decided. To use LeWitt's terminology, the form is defined in an expressionist manner.

Since it forces a design to be created, the dissolution of *form* in the field of analysis attempted by Grassi is not accompanied by an effective dissolution of the *subject*-architect in a process of perfunctory deduction of form from "the pre-existent". In addition to being a vehicle for subjectivity due to its contextualist meaning, the form of typological projects is also subjective because the typology itself is not able to determine that form and it has to be produced in an authorial manner, even in Grassi's case.

From this point of view, one can compare two different kinds of "deduction of the project from the context" – the neo-rationalist kind and the kind that is particular to the processes of the MVRDV collective and which approach the paradigm that I identified with Ferriss' skyscrapers in chapter I-2. MVRDV deals with non-visual contextual data (normative, environmental, etc.) and its works can be objectively enunciated as ideas (discoursive); Grassi deals with visual data (volumetry and constructive configurations) and his works result from a *figurative* and *subjective* process of definition.

To conclude the analysis of neo-rationalist architecture, I would like to return to Solà-Morales' text. This author forms a parallel between neo-rationalist architecture and conceptual art, considering that both seek "justification based on the elementary data of their own activity"[467]. More specifically, they seek a

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para la ambigüedad; por esto – cuando se convierte en tránsito necesario – su medio de representación clásico ha sido siempre, y lo sigue siendo, el dibujo constructivo, el dibujo técnico. Y es por ello por lo que me esfuerzo en no dejar ningún grado de autonomía al propio dibujo (...).].

[467] Solà-Morales, "Tendenza", p. 241 [(...) el interés por la fundamentación desde los datos primeros de su propia actividad (...).].

"mental justification of the artistic process"[468] and operate through an "economy of means and (...) an intensification of the elements used"[469]. In this sense, conceptual art and neo-rationalist architecture constitute a practice of rethinking the respective theoretical foundations of the discipline. Conceptual art can be partially understood in that way (although remembering that conceptual art operates more through *critical awareness* than through identifying a *basic repertoire*, which is a reductionist task characteristic of the modern movement[470]). I believe, however, that the economy of means serves different purposes in each case. For Grassi, it serves to ensure a conservative ethic of "integrating the work into its respective context", or perhaps a moral "modesty of the architect". (In a perspective very distant to what I propose here, one of the reasons that Grassi too uses Hilberseimer as a reference is the austerity of his design in his projects – which he sees as a positive absence of "originality")[471]. In conceptual art, the aim is to escape formal precepts and, ostensibly, to destabilise the concepts subject to the assessment of the art work.

Eisenman and the neo-rationalists operate within a cultural paradox. On the one hand, they live in the aftermath of modernist reductionism – evident in the need to reinstate architecture *ab initio* and the desire to institute procedural foundations that are universally valid – and, on the other hand, the nostalgia for a disciplinary autonomy centred on form, with academicist overtones (both) and historicist overtones (the Italians).

the "emptying"

I have analysed three possibilities for the emptying of form: projects that are emptied of content in order to expose the "mechanisms of their own writing", projects whose content is the void itself and projects that are made redundant with regard to the context to which they belong. With regard to the first possibility, I argued that the architecture project does not become tautological through the substantive emptying of its forms, in other words, by being referred to the territory of mathematical or geometrical logic. The attempt *to desemanticise* architectural forms is betrayed by the *resemanticisation* that use imposed on them. With regard to the second possibility, I argued that the possibility of representing the void implies, according to the very definition of "representation", stepping into the universe of metaphorical creation of form and communication mechanisms that are substantive in themselves – a universe foreign to conceptual art. On the other hand, the "represented void" was proven relative in that it vehicles ideological contents. Finally, the attempt to make the project redundant in relation to its context via typological integration not only finds obstacles in the realisation of form (not the vocation of typology), but vehicles a set of traditionalist values.

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[468] *Ibidem*, p. 240 [(...) fundamentación mental del processo artístico.].
[469] *Ibidem*, p. 241 [(...) la economía de médios e (...) la intensificación de los elementos utilizados.].
[470] In 2004, I argued that within the scope of the modern movement, a task of "reduction of architecture to its minimum components" had been achieved. The dissection of architectural artifacts can vary though. It can touch: (1) the form, dissected into white volumes (Le Corbusier) or in colour layouts (neo-plasticism); (2) the construction, dissected into "structure + minimal parietal elements" or pre-fabricated modules to be juxtaposed in order to configure the building; (3) the program, dissected into articulated part in the same manner that a set of rectangles can be articulated in a diagram (pavilion system). Capela, *Para uma Arquitectura Funcional*, pp. 8-24.
[471] Giorgio Grassi, "La Arquitectura de Hilberseimer", in *La Arquitectura como Oficio*, pp. 217-226.

I propose to summarise the analysis I have just performed, centred on the substantive emptying of the work, in the table below. For each project, I identify: (1) what is removed from it in order to empty it, (2) what is made to stand out in order to the emptying and therefore becomes an object causing self-reflection and (3) what resists the emptying, continuing to give the project a "substantive" dimension.

	that which is removed (or, at least, intended to be removed) from the work in order to empty it	**what is summarised in the work for the purpose of self-reflection**	**what resists the emptying, remaining "substantive" in the work**
Peter Eisenman: first *Houses of Cards*	semantic, and to a degree, functional rationales present in the configuration of form	compositional operations (the "syntax of architectural form")	commitment to function; mannerism in syntactic manipulation of form
Hiromi Fujii: more "serial" projects	semantic, and to a large extent, functional rationale present in the configuration of form	phenomena giving meaning to tautological forms	commitment to function (even if minimal) *resemanticisation* resulting from use
Ludwig Hilberseimer: *Hochhausstadt*	sectorial hierarchy of the city; compositional precepts	the capitalist logic of production and consumption	non-literal form; ideological content
Archizoom Associati *No-Stop City*	sectorial hierarchy of the city; autonomy of form (or of "language") as an architectural value	the capitalist logic of production and consumption;	ideological content
Superstudio: *Monumento Continuo*	differentiation between distinct architectural interventions; hierarchy of the components of form	total uniformity as a consequence of the capitalist culture (namely, of technological culture)	archetypical form and monumentality; ideological content
Giorgio Grassi: neo-rationalism	invention	(unable to resolve the project, typological replication merely serves a traditionalist purpose and does not lead to self-reflection.)	traditionalism

I have already mentioned, when speaking about process, that a work of architecture cannot be tautological (analytical). It is inevitably empirical (synthetic). The interest in analysing these approaches to the void is not to conclude that the void is unattainable. Instead, it is to understand that the empirical dimension of architecture re-emerges in the projects – how a determined partial emptying always results in the empirical substance appearing elsewhere. Architecture always resists emptying. It is that resistance that I have attempted to enunciate in the right-hand column (what remains of "substantive") in contrast to the left-hand column (what is taken from the work). The concentration of form to the detriment of function reveals that function is inalienable. The escape from form due to its bureaucratic redundancy helps the ideology emerge. The escape from form through its dilution into the context is put to the service of identity in its most conservative acceptation.

To conclude, I would like to refocus the argument on the initial question raised in this sub-chapter:

the possibility that a project could vehicle a definition of "architecture" by means of its emptying. I am using as a reference the strategy of *analytical* conceptual art (namely Kosuth's) that is based on the emptying of the work, turning it into a pure definition of "art" by awarding it the status of "art work".

I believe that the void is unable to encompass the definition of "architecture" because the definition itself implies that it is *substantive*. What defines architecture is the fact that its works cannot be emptied. The attempt to produce an autonomous architecture through emptying merely produces a demonstration of the impossibility of autonomy – through the method of "*reductio ad absurdum*".

This acknowledgment closes the argument of this sub-chapter, but I would still like to ask: so, is it not possible to strictly attribute the status of "work of architecture" to a given entity as a means of defining "work of architecture"?

I believe that there are two obstacles to that possibility. The first is the fact that Duchamp's demiurgical aphorism "If I say it is art, it's art" cannot be transposed to the scope of the project in a simple manner. It is not true to say "I say it is architecture, it's architecture". Not everything can be considered architecture. For example, a "commentary about architecture" cannot acquire the status of project design just because it is subject to a change of context ("the concept of dog does not bark ") – which is possible in art[472]. At the same time, it has to perform its function. *Architecture has a reduced capacity to become external to itself.*

This is true even if empirical conceptual art works are used as the reference. In an intervention such as that of Asher in *Claire Copley Gallery* (the removal of the wall which conceals the office), the work is the situation of contemplation; it is not mistaken for the system observed. In a work such as *Shapolsky et al...* by Haacke (essentially, a set of files about buildings held by a real estate agent), the work is documental; it is as external to its subject as a newspaper is external to the earthquake it headlines. On the other hand, works of architecture, by definition, are not epistemologically distinct from the reality to which they may eventually be critical. It is their reference to the real world that defines them as architecture. This is what occurs in works such as *Hochhausstadt* – which simultaneously *are* and *represent* a real phenomenon. Out of the works I examined, the one that most approaches a "work of commentary" is the *Monumento Continuo* – the one that is furthest from being a *project*.

The second obstacle is related to the use of nominalism (the act of stating "This is art") as a strategy in order to specifically reach disciplinary *autonomy*. Duchamp's readymades, if they question the definition of "art" also imply, evidently, the more empirical aspects of artistic practice. They not only question the empirical aspects of the definition of art (such as, for example, the hegemony of manual execution), but also the more ideological aspects of the conjuncture of artistic practices (such as, for example, the relationship between art and production / work). Reading them in this ambivalent manner, they are compatible with the

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[472] As I explained in chapter I-1, I disagree with Dickie's perspective on this matter.

specificity of architecture. They can, in fact, be very easily associated to the projects of the duo Lacaton & Vassal. The *House in Coutras* [94 . 95 . 96] is composed of two greenhouses chosen from a greenhouse catalogue. I mentioned it earlier. The *Place Léon Aucoc* [97] is a project dated from 1996 in which the architects shape the square with its form it already has. The house defines architecture as *the creation of a climate-controlled environment* and, to that extent, inhabitable. It is a low-tech and readymade version of *Environment-Bubble* by Banham & Dalegret. The square defines architecture as a *support for daily life* – a daily life which, after performing surveys in the neighbourhood, Lacaton & Vassal concluded did not require any changes to be made.

Also in these cases, the definition of "architecture project" in the form of a project needs an institutional context that gives the work the status of "work of architecture" – a task that international magazines have been performing.

(the emptying of the project and) the "politics" in the project

In chapter I-1, when examining conceptual art, I considered four possibilities for a work to be political:

(1) the *theme* of an artwork may be political;

(2) the theme of an artwork may be the political mechanisms involved in the artistic environment;

(3) an art work may be political because of how it is positioned within the public sphere;

(4) an art work may address the assumptions subjacent to what is thought to be the *distinctive* feature of art – which is also political.

I argued that the first possibility does not fit into the scope of the self-reflexive and, as a consequence, it does not fit into the scope of the *conceptual*. In addition, I argued that the first and second possibilities do not relate directly to art; they do not have a direct implication on what confers artistic value on the work. Conversely, the last two possibilities are, in fact, those that result from what the art work is, while art.

In this sub-chapter I will address this issue, that the work may produce self-reflection of a *political* nature, by considering the specificity of the architectural project.

The practice of architecture is more immersed in social praxis than art. Whereas it is possible for an artist to work in isolation and depend on external factors only to publicise and/or sell his works, the architect's work is usually developed entirely in close relation with other people. Clients, co-workers, engineers, regulatory authorities, manufacturers and builders are agents a project designer deals with in his everyday life, or who are somehow involved in it. This is true whether the work in question is made available to the public or not.

In view of this specificity of architecture, I would like to start by identifying two political aspects of this discipline:

(1) the social role (or mission) attached to the practice of architecture;

(2) the system of production.

Whenever a project is developed, the architect assumes a position in relation to these two aspects. He contextualises his professional practice with regard to both the paradigm of society underlying the "commission" itself (public/private, democratising/totalitarian, repressive/libertarian, essentialist/consumerist, technocratic/recreational, etc.) and the real labour and commercial systems according to which his project is developed and the work is built.

This happens even without the architect being aware of it. He may take the situation in which he operates for granted – something so common and established that he does not devote much thought to it. However, when he is aware of it, he usually does not mix it up with the aspects relating to form. He

separates the social context in which he operates from the field of the "project itself", which focuses on those aspects that specifically deal with the configuration of form[473].

These two political aspects of the practice of architecture are both fundamental for the construction of a moral and ethical perspective of the discipline. But in the context of the theme that I address herein, the relevant question is whether they can emerge in the project in a self-reflexive manner, and how.

(1) the social role (or mission) associated to the practice of architecture

This is such a political issue that it is largely beyond the scope of the discipline and the strict scope of the project. The role fulfilled by architecture – the social programme it serves – is a matter for ideologists and politicians. The history of the modern movement, as it is written by authors such as Leonardo Benevolo[474], is a history of social programs and political circumstances, beneficial or adverse for its accomplishment. It is intertwined with the history of ideologies, parties and political regimes, laws, models of land ownership and administration, classes, associations, philanthropy, labour, emancipation of women, etc.

In this sense, it is possible to address the role of architecture without referring to projects. It is possible to discuss the context and the objectives of projects without referring specifically to form. The nature of the work for which an architectural project is conceived, or the political paradigm it serves, are not directly linked to the project itself. For example, a certain project may be developed in the context of a program which is experimental from a sociological perspective, but which, from an architectural perspective, is merely fulfilling a set of purely conservative principles. The project is politically relevant and artistically irrelevant.

This is crucial to evaluate the possibility of a self-reflection that focuses specifically on the social role of architecture: such a project might entail a reflection which is centred on "architecture as social program" and which does not cover *self-reflection* relative to "architecture as project". Self-reflection, as it is perceived here, can only emerge in the project through the characteristics of the project itself or, more specifically, through the "project as art". Although these issues underlie the practice of the project (in particular those practices that do not aim to produce "works of authorship"), they only become significant through artistic intentionality. *Architecture is inevitably political because of the kind of inter-active operativity that defines it* (in this sense, it is more political than art) *and its artistic dimension may be minute* (which does not make sense in art), *but the political aspects can only emerge in the project through artistic intentionality*.

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[473] One could argue that the cost of the work is an exception, seeing that it is a social factor which the architect is almost always forced to take into account in order to decide on form (areas, materials, structural audacity, etc.). But I believe that the dichotomy expensive / cheap is usually just a "question of opportunity" – the opportunity of producing a larger or smaller project, a more or less sophisticated project, according to your "luck" when a work is commissioned. Therefore, it is a dichotomy that does not imply, therefore, the performance of any kind of self-reflection by the architect.

[474] Leonardo Benevolo, *Historia de la Arquitectura Moderna*, trans. Mariuccia Galfetti, Juan Díaz de Atauri, Anna Maria Pujol i Puigvehí & Joan Giner, Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 5th ed., 1986 [originally published *Storia dell'architettura moderna*, Bari: Laterza, 1960]. With regard to the historiographical contours of Benevolo's production, see: Panayotis Tournikiotis, *The Historiography of Modern Architecture*, Cambridge (Mass)/London: The MIT Press, 1999, pp. 85-111.

Therefore, I will not discuss this theme in itself, but only in so far as it reflects on other aspects that I will address.

(2) the production system

The social role of architecture is a question that relates to the nature of the tasks requiring the technical expertise of the architect. The question arises mainly with regard to the commission and the programs it defines or, in exceptional cases, the architect's initiatives to define his field of action, putting himself willingly at the service of society. I will now address a more concrete theme. It specifically deals with the logic of *labour* – the commercial and legal aspects of project practices, the relationships every architect establishes with his partners, or how the execution of the work requires certain methods, certain types of material, models of social interaction between agents (such as manufacturers, builders, inhabitants), etc.

Before I address this theme I would like to return to Benjamin's essay "The Author as Producer" that I have already used as a reference in the previous chapter. It is in this famous text that, as I have said, Benjamin states that before asking "what is the attitude of a work *to* the relations of production of its time?" it is important to ask "what is its position *in* them?" I will place this text at the centre of my argumentation. I do this, first and foremost, because it is important in order to address the "relation between artistic practice and production" in the context of architecture *as well*. I also do it because it is referred by two seminal authors of theory of architecture – Manfredo Tafuri and K. Michael Hays – whose arguments I consider particularly useful for the debate regarding what can be a *specifically conceptual* "relationship between artistic practice and production".

Tafuri is the first to appropriate the theory elaborated by Benjamin in order to consider the political aspects related to the practice of architecture. He refers to the "The Author as Producer" namely in the essay "L'Architecture dans le Boudoir" of 1974 (which I have already mentioned), in which he writes:

> Among the questions posed in "The Author as Producer", there are no concessions to proposals for salvation by means of an "alternative" use of linguistic elements, no ideology beyond a "communist" art as opposed to a "fascist" art. There is only a structural consideration – authentically structural – of the productive role of intellectual activities, and therefore certain questions regarding their possible contribution to the development of the relations of production.[475]

Based on this, Tafuri advocates a perspective on architecture that focuses on its ability to also serve as an instrument of effective transformation of relations of production. He suggests that this transforming potential is a fundamental factor in rethinking the history of modern architecture – which includes reviewing who its true protagonists are – as well as in the critical analysis of project design. About this critical consideration of the project, Tafuri asserts:

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[475] Tafuri, "L'Architecture dans le Boudoir", p. 311.

> To think of the architect as a producer is to renounce almost entirely the traditional baggage of values and judgments. As an entire production cycle rather than a single work is desired, critical analysis must be directed towards the material constraints which determine the production cycle itself. Yet this is not enough. The specific analysis must be made compatible with the dynamics of the entire economic cycle, not to generate those misunderstandings brought about by an economic vision subordinated to the needs of architecture. In other words, to change the scope of what architecture wishes to be, or wishes to say, towards that which building construction is in reality, means that we must find suitable parameters which will allow us to understand the role of the construction within the entire capitalistic system. It may be objected that such an economic reading of building production is other than the reading of architecture as a system of communications. We can only answer that, wishing to discover the tricks of a magician, it is often better to observe him from behind the scenes rather than to continue to stare at him from a seat in the audience.[476]

This excerpt provides an account of two aspects of Tafuri's analysis that I would like to draw attention to. In fact, these are two *oppositions* between terms that I believe incompatible within the ethical context Tafuri claims for architecture. The first opposition is between the "perspective of the project as an economic activity" and the "work as a meaningful entity". The second is between the scope of the project and the scope of critique. Next, I will enunciate them in more detail and discuss their implications for the theme addressed herein – the possibility that the project is self-reflexive with regard to the aspects of production.

The opposition between "considering the project as an economic activity" and the "work as a meaningful entity" is also established by Tafuri in the seminal *Teorie e Storia dell'Architettura* (Theories and History of Architecture), published in 1968[477]. In that book, Tafuri mentions another of Benjamin's texts – "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction". Benjamin appears as a reference when the chronological analysis of the "*crisis of the object* in architecture" reaches the age of the historical avant-gardes. Tafuri is interested (among other aspects related to reproducibility) in the distinction made by Benjamin between the painter and the cameraman, regarding the relationship that each establishes with reality:

> The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web.[478]

Taking this distinction as a starting point, and referring to the historical avant-gardes, Tafuri defines two paradigms of appropriation of the new industrial reality by artists or architects:

- *that of those who embrace the 'new nature of artificial "things"' taking them as cult object, and, specifically in relation to the artistic practice, as object of* mimesis*, i.e., of* representation.
  Among these are those artists who still resort to traditional modes of production to execute the work and who adopt the new modes of production only as a theme for the work. About them, Tafuri claims

[476] *Ibidem*.
[477] Manfredo Tafuri, *Teorias e História da Arquitectura*, trans. Ana Brito & Luís Leitão, Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 2nd ed., 1988 [originally published as *Teoria e Storia dell'Architettura*, Bari: Laterza 1968].
[478] Benjamin, "A Obra de Arte...", p. 100.

that “their work is typical – these are Benjamin's words – of someone who is not free from the equipment, someone who looks on with enthusiasm, instead of standing behind it to use it”[479].

- *that of those who stand “behind the equipment” to use it*.

This category includes the artists who adopt new modes of production in their own practice. Benjamin is mainly interested in those artists who act as cameramen. They are the ones who react to the new industrial production systems and create new modes of artistic production. It is precisely in relation to the practice of these artists that it is relevant to ask “what is the attitude of a work to the relations of production of its time?” – the question asked by Benjamin in “The Author as Producer”. For his part, Tafuri appropriates Benjamin's theory because he is interested in identifying, also within the scope of architecture, the field of those who stand “behind the equipment” to use it. This leads to the opposition that I am addressing: *standing behind the equipment is, for Tafuri, to opt for purely political issues, to the detriment of any issue of formal nature.*

In fact, this does not mean that Tafuri thinks that it is impossible for form to have an ideological meaning. What happens is that, from his point of view, form does not fulfil a politically operative function. The meaning Tafuri finds in projects that are mainly an exercise in formal configuration is, precisely, their political inoperability. Form is the exile of architecture.

As was normal in his day, Tafuri analyses architectural forms as *language*. Forms are entities referenced under a certain code, which may be manipulated or subverted, but determines the rules of conception and interpretation of the work. An architectural work acquires an artistic status because it is a linguistic manoeuvre. And it is also for this reason that Tafuri considers the possibility of a work being self-reflexive. As a matter of fact, Tafuri does not use the term “self-reflexive” or an equivalent term. He talks about “metalanguage”. “Architecture that speaks about itself” is the “architecture that speaks about its own language”. For example, according to this assumption Tafuri identifies five models of experimentation in *Teorie e Storia dell'Architettura* (Theories and History of Architecture)[480] and three models of critical architecture in “L'Architecture dans le Boudoir”[481]. Within this framework of values, the ideological meanings of forms find themselves somewhere between these two possibilities.

(1) When, in a project, one uses a certain established code (such as the classical or the rational, for example), one is using the language of the past. The project takes reference from within the patrimony of the discipline of architecture itself. It operates by *citation*.

The word “history” seems appropriate for the analysis of this type of project. However, an architectural project is not capable of making history, because it is not capable of generating knowledge about the past. More than referring to the past, this type of citation refers to the

[479] Tafuri, *Teorias e História da Arquitectura*, p. 59.
[480] *Ibidem*, pp. 136-137.
[481] Tafuri, “L'Architecture dans le Boudoir”, pp. 292-309.

relationship between the present time (the time when the citation is made) and the past (the time of architecture that has been cited). The project speaks about the historicity of its time. As Andrew Leach observes, it becomes *historiographical*[482].

It is within this architectural discourse about the relation with the past that Tafuri identifies an ideological dimension of language. The inaugural act of metalanguage in architecture is the recovery of classical language by Brunelleschi, as he claims in Theories and *History*. This results in *Architecture* in its self-reflexive stage. And it also results, as described by Tafuri, in a trajectory of *crisis* for architecture, because it is trapped in its own retroactivity.

(2) Tafuri considers the possibility of avoiding the codes of the past as well as the type of contents they allow to be conveyed. As I mentioned earlier, he even considers the possibility that architectural forms may be tautological. However, from an ideological point of view, he considers that those experiments are an expression of a self-centred and, consequently, nihilistic architecture[483].

Forms are condemned, whether they refer to a relationship with the past (which is alienating), or whether they express the void (which, according to Tafuri, means resigning oneself to alienation).

In "L'Architecture dans de Boudoir", Tafuri cites an excerpt of "The Author as Producer" to highlight the importance of the role of the architect in the production system. This is after he sceptically enumerates, throughout the essay, the ways language has been used and manipulated by architects. He points out the political importance of the "architect as producer" to the detriment of the innocuousness of the "architect as artist", that is, the "architect as a manipulator of language". In *Theories and History*, he asserts:

> The return to language is a proof of failure. It is necessary to examine to what degree such a failure is due to the intrinsic character of the architectural discipline and to what degree to a still unresolved ambiguity.[484]

No doubt can be more self-reflexive than the doubt which focuses on the actual definition of architecture as a discipline. According to Tafuri, the alternative to accepting failure consists in revealing the ambiguities which are the basis of such a failure – "to discover a magician's tricks", as he states in "L'Architecture dans le Boudoir". Architecture needs to return to the economic mechanisms it serves. In view of this diagnosis, I ask: if Tafuri considers that language is not the appropriate resource for this task, how does he propose that it is fulfilled? By what means?

It is at this point of the argument that the second contrast characterising the ethical conjuncture elaborated by Tafuri arises. I refer to the contrast between the scope of the project and that of critique. In view of the ineffectiveness of language, Tafuri thinks that it is inevitable to shift the possibility of a political

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[482] Andrew Leach, *Manfredo Tafuri: Choosing History*, Ghent: A&S/books, 2007, p. 97.

[483] In "L'Architecture dans le Boudoir", Tafuri states that, in the ideological fallout from the failure of the modern movement, " (...) he, who is willing to make architecture speak is forced to rely on materials empty of any meaning: he is forced to reduce to degree zero all architectonic ideology, all dreams of social function and any utopian residues. (...) Their purism or their rigorism is that of someone driven to a desperate action that cannot be justified except from within itself." Tafuri, "L'Architecture dans le Boudoir", p. 292.

[484] *Ibidem*, p. 309.

stance on the part of architecture towards critique. Architectural language is viewed as an addiction, in relation to which it is only possible: either to succumb to it, accepting the innocuousness of forms (and the "intrinsic nature of the discipline of architecture"); or avoiding it completely, opting for critique and its political operativity (to try and solve the "still unresolved ambiguity"). The "charter of values and judgments" that must be renounced is not that of the preponderance of form but rather of form itself.

Tafuri neither believes in a territory of intersection between politics and form in the scope of the project, nor does he believe in a territory of intersection between criticism and project in the sphere of the discipline. In other words, from his point of view: (1) the most political commitment an architect can make as a project designer, is to put his technical skills at the service of a social program – which has nothing to do with the meaning of forms; (2) the activity of architects who dedicate themselves to form is politically innocuous; (3) the construction of a politically relesvant disciplinary discourse is a prerogative of critique.

Tafuri takes Benjamin's theory as a reference to argue in favour of this point of view. For him, standing "behind the equipment" does not mean to simply consider the political aspects of architecture to the detriment of the formal aspects, as I have already mentioned. It also means operating within the scope of critique to the detriment of the scope of the project. It is through one's writing and before asking "what is the attitude of a work to the relations of production of its time?", that one should ask "what is its position in them?". I believe Tafuri's perspective and its relation to Benjamin's can be accurately summarised this way. *Tafuri refers to Benjamin in order to vindicate critique as a* locus *for ideological stances taking in architecture*.

Tafuri is right, of course: architecture projects do not change the world, nor do they revolutionise consciences. Building practices are based on market logics (which vary) and architecture only becomes socially enterprising if there are political programs supporting it. However, in this dissertation, projects are viewed as *artistic practice*. I have no pretension to consider the practices of construction in their effective social dimension (as claimed by Tafuri), but only what is encompassed in the context of the project in itself.

In the previous chapter I argued in favour of the *partial* mission of the neo-avant-gardes and against Bürger's perspective, who observes them in the light of their ability to effectively "reject the idea of artistic practice as a whole". Similarly, I assume that a "singular work" can fulfil a partial mission – a self-reflexive mission – instead of being able to change "an entire cycle of production" (to use Tafuri's words).

Starting off from this assumption, it is possible to interpret "The Author as Producer" differently, acknowledging that the project may itself convey a discourse about production and that "the author" may be the designer-architect (and not just the critic-architect). In that case, it is precisely how the designer-architect chooses to stand within the system of production that becomes meaningful. Instead of *writing* about how the practice of architecture is related to the relations of production of a time, he *experiments* positioning himself within it.

I believe this is also what Benjamin suggests when he uses the analogy of the painter and the

cameraman. Benjamin claims that instead of relations of production being something on which the artist elaborates in the internal context of the contents of the work, it is possible for the work to reflect how its own production stands in view of those relations. Instead of producing a discourse in a literal sense, the author produces it through action. The author transforms his status as producer into a creative status.

If this is the case, what is expected of the work's language is that it should be able to communicate this position in view of the relations of production of its time; that it should become transparent regarding the aspects of production involved in the work. This may happen through *technique*, that is, through what the form of the work reveals about the production technique that led to it. This is the hypothesis I find in "The Author as Producer", when Benjamin writes:

> In bringing up technique, I have named a concept that makes literary products accessible to an immediately social, and therefore materialist, analysis. Simultaneously, the concept of technique permits a dialectical enunciation, by means of which the fruitless controversy between form and content can be surpassed.[485]

It is precisely a "territory of intersection between form and content" that is created when technique (an issue of *material and formal* resolution) is taken as an object of self-reflection (i.e., as *content*). Technique is related to the material manipulation of substances and components and is at the basis of production and labour systems. It is therefore an interface between the concrete realm of the work and the abstract realm of production, and, to the extent that it is an expression of work, it is also a political content.

Using the work's technique, Benjamin thus enunciates a common ground between *production* in a general sense and *production* in a specific artistic sense (the same common ground referred by Roberts, with renewed complexity, in his book *The Intangibilities of Form*). He establishes a relationship between *technique* in everyday production and speculative *technique,* which is characteristic of the art work – a relationship in which: (1) by emphasising the technique used in the work, that work is placed at the same level as the technique of everyday production, and artistic work is placed at the same level as non-artistic work; (2) by shifting technique away from its canons, the work becomes a field of free speculation around technique and around work in art, and, consequently, free of the general issues of technique and work. The scope of the work is therefore of an inductive nature. The work shows some specific aspects, limited to its own production, but whose meaning becomes more complex as it becomes a specific case referring to production in general.

This interpretation of Benjamin has been largely addressed by K. Michael Hays, in particular regarding the work of Hannes Meyer. Note what Hays writes about Meyer's proposal for an invitation to tender at *Palais de la Société des Nations* (Palace of Nations; *Völkerbundpalast* in German), in 1927:

> The subject must (...) think through the casual structures and processes operating in time behind what appears to be given and

[485] Benjamin, "The Author as Producer", p. 140.

> objectified. I shall refer to this condition of the work of architecture as its *factural indexicality*, by which I understand that the work points to the (reproductive) processes of its making, seemingly generating its own representation without authorial mediation. (...) The indexical status of Meyer's project signifies nothing less than a rejection of any transcendental conception of the architectural object in favor of a conception of architectural practice as a worldly, engaged activity, a material intervention and organizing force; as an indication of the potential involvement of the architect with certain socially developed processes, materials, and standards of production (...).[486]

Hays identifies an operating model in Meyer's project from which authorial mediation is excluded (the formal "authorship" devices), in favor of the configuration of forms that accounts for the processes used in its execution. Further in his argument, Hays associates this operating model to Benjamin and, using it as reference, states that in Meyer's project

> (...) the reproductive technique *as procedure* takes on the features of a system of signification. (...) The building is neither beautiful nor ugly [as Meyer explains in the manifest *Bauen* (To build)]. It asks to be evaluated as a structural invention. In refusing traditional representational forms, avant-garde architects re-evaluated the logic of a particular source of meaning; they did not deny meaning altogether. They saw meaning as arising from the multiple forces of social practice rather than the formal qualities of the auratic art object.[487]

In other words, in this operative context, language is not nullified. That is not possible: language must be present if the work communicates. It is only that the language of the work is *literal*: it is made transparent in relation to the procedures carried out in order to achieve the work.

Whereas Tafuri enunciates the possibility that language is considered as theme, Hays enunciates the possibility that language is instrumentalised so that other themes may emerge from the work. For Tafuri, forms become transparent in relation to the mechanisms of their own language (producing "metalanguage"); Hays believes that forms become transparent in relation to the mechanisms of their production. Both assume that the work can communicate about itself – or, according to the terminology used herein, that the work can be *self-reflexive* – and that it can focus on the technical aspects of the project. However, whereas Tafuri thinks that form can communicate the technical questions of its *language*, Hays considers that form can communicate the technical questions of its *production*.

In fact, Hays refers to a type of communication which is achieved through what I designate as "literalness". In line with the typology that I proposed in chapter I-2, Hays refers specifically to the literalness which is the result of the language of the work being literal with regard to the constructive rationale behind its execution or, as he asserts about Meyer's manifest "Bauen" (To build), which results from

> (...) to deny a secondary level of aesthetic meaning beyond the physical traces of rationalized building technique.[488]

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[486] K. Michael Hays, "Reproduction and Negation: The Cognitive Project of the Avant-Garde", in Beatriz Colomina (ed.), *Architectureproduction*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988, pp. 158-160.
[487] Hays, *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject*, p. 163.
[488] *Ibidem*.

This explanation makes it very clear that Hays' theme consists in reconsidering architecture as an artistic practice *in view of industrialisation*. It draws from Meyer's historical context, which is close to that of Benjamin's. But that is not the context of the conceptual universe. To return to my argument, I will try to draw a line between what, in Hays' analysis, is in accordance with the conceptual universe that I have been describing and what is solely appropriate within Meyer's historical context. With that aim, I will first address the aspects of indexicality and then the type of procedures that the work reflects.

Hays' interpretation of Benjamin includes, in particular, the concept of "indexicality". Although the word is not part of Benjamin's vocabulary, the concept is present both in "Work of Art" and in "The Author as Producer". When Benjamin takes *montage* as a paradigm of technical procedure of the avant-gardes, he is referring to indexicality: the work ostentatiously exposes the procedures (in that case *montage*) that originated it. However, the concept of indexicality as used by Hays is broader.

Benjamin associates the possibility that procedures acquire visibility within the work specifically to those works that appear disruptive. He mentions, for example, the Dadaist *collages*. For Benjamin, the deviation from normal industrial production towards spontaneous procedures is what allows the work to become self-reflexive with regard to production. Hays, for his part, does not refer to disruptive works when he uses (and clarifies) the concept of indexicality. He generally refers to works that are literal in relation to the procedures that originated them and, in particular industrial production procedures. That is the case with Meyer.

In view of such a general concept of indexicality, which does not require the work to offer a sign as obvious of its production as the disruptive combination of its parts, one can ask how production procedures stand out within the work. The answer resides in Hays' phrase that I quoted last: to deny a secondary level of aesthetic meaning beyond the physical traces of rationalised building technique; by being literal, to use the vocabulary I propose.

This generic nature that characterises Hays' meaning of "indexicality" allows it to be used when considering not only modern architecture but also neo-avant-garde works which are not disruptive. The possibility that the work is the direct reflexion of *productive* procedures that originated them is a common feature particularly in the works of *Process art* and some works of conceptual art. (When I say "productive" I exclude, from the start, the process-based works that reflect *generative* processes.) The difference resides in the type of procedures that are reflected in the work. In *Process art*, these are procedures of material execution. The work is, as I said, the material entity that has been subject to a set of manipulations and which reveals the marks of those manipulations. Those are the works characterised by indexicality *par excellence*. What characterises them is precisely the fact that they are *indices of* the actions to which they were subject. When Hays speaks about indexicality in architecture he is not referring to manual procedures such as those of *Process Art*, but rather to industrial reproduction procedures – those also referred to by Benjamin when he speaks of "mechanical reproduction". They are his theme. However, whether they are

crafted or serial (for example mechanized), they are always procedures for the material production of the work. The productive procedures which are typically conceptual are different from all of these. As I have argued previously, they are of an *administrative* nature.

Therefore, in the realm of self-reflexive works with a specific focus on production, there is a difference between those whose focus is on *material* production (typical of the machine era) and those whose focus is on production as a set of *administrative* procedures (typical of the information era).

I will try to clarify this distinction with examples.

Both the neo-brutalist works and the greenhouses of Lacaton & Vassal present a bare constitution. Their constitution is made ostentatiously present due to their unusual elementariness and informality. Their meaning derives from the fact that they raise questions such as: "Is this finished? Is it going to stay like this?" First and foremost, what is at stake is the formal and material status of the work (the work is "not pretty" or even "no good"), but that is a theme which I will address later. For now, the most important issue is that, when it is suggested that there are stages of the construction works that were not performed, the entire building process – that is, the set of productive procedures that lead to the artifact – is brought into question. This is why they are self-reflexive works which focus on production. Up to this point, all that I have stated applies to both types of projects. They diverge mainly in the manner in which the constitution of the works is defined.

The "brutalism" in neo-brutalist works results from a formal enunciation. It is about defining a constructive configuration: a determined composition for the walls, the absence of cladding, the existence of visible infrastructural elements, etc. This does not happen with the greenhouse buildings of Lacaton & Vassal. These buildings are configurations that already exist. The project only determines that they be assigned a new function. It determines a dislocation from one context to another, like the enunciation of any readymade. Therefore, it determines a procedure of a statutory and, broadly speaking, *administrative* nature.

In this way, we can also see that, much as I said with regard to literalness, the "neo-brutalist construction" is not an idea capable of defining the whole project (it only defines one aspect of the project), whereas "adopting a greenhouse as a home" is an idea that defines the project.

However, in this regard, I would like to emphasise the work of Santiago Cirugeda. I believe that he is the architect who has worked the most with the theme of production over the last decades. He has made his projects singularly relevant in both artistic and political terms. Cirugeda does not operate within the canonical circumstances of the project. He invents them. He invents *productive* definitions for what is called "project". For example, this is what happens when he provides "user instructions" to build elementary artifacts, in his website *Recetas Urbanas* (Urban Recipes)[489], or when he manages the redistribution of used

[489] http://www.recetasurbanas.net/

containers to different locations in Spain so that they can be reused to become new readymade buildings, or readymade extensions for existing buildings.

On one hand, Cirugeda speculates about the deontological (not to say ontological) aspects of the discipline through the invention of productive modes. He speculates about "how does architecture provide a service". On the other hand, he speculates about "how does the architect provide a service", that is, about the nature of the procedures that constitute his work. For a pragmatic reason, Cirugeda acts by avoiding the rule "designing forms as the centre of architecture as a discipline". He does not make "projects" in the usual sense. He acts through the use of procedures of *administrative nature*. He does not create forms; he manages processes with a view to achieving works.

In this regard, I would like to mention two other statements, in which Cirugeda uses the applicable law for a purpose other than what it was created for. Cirugeda talks about the first, named *Kuvas S. C.* (Kontainers S. C.), dating from 1997 [87 . 88]:

> The strategy involved applying to the Town Hall for a licence to occupy the public throughway in order to install a container which would supposedly serve to remove debris from a small worksite at a house located there. However, once he had obtained the licence, the container was used as the support for a swing that became the first self-managed games zone. After a few days, a surprised neighbour denounced the strange appearance of the container with the swing. The police called the phone number indicated and the citizen responsible for the installation had to go to the police station in order to show them the necessary documents and licences. The Town Planning Department ignored the complaint seeing that the citizen had met all the requirements established by municipal law: the container was in bright colours, its placement did not affect traffic in the public throughway and the owner was clearly identified. Additionally, the Planning department was not able to find legal arguments to prevent the use of the container for purposes other than the collection of construction materials. [490]

The title of the second enunciation is *Andamios* (Scaffolding) and dates from 1998 [89]. It is intended to be put into practice in Seville and is based on a strategy similar to that of *Kuvas S. C.* In this case, the purpose of the enunciation is to create juxtaposed habitable spaces, external to the façade of existing buildings. For that purpose, Cirugeda proposes that the owner or user applies for a licence to install scaffolding, as if he was going to perform construction works and use it as a support and structure for the construction[491]. In addition, the enunciation includes a set of building instructions.

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[490] http://www.recetasurbanas.net/index.php?idioma=ESP&REF=1&ID=0002&IDM=i00807#img [La estrategia consistió en solicitar al Ayuntamiento una licencia de ocupación de la vía pública para instalar un contenedor, que supuestamente serviría para retirar los escombros de una obra menor realizada en una casa vecina. Sin embargo, una vez otorgado el permiso, el contenedor sirvió como soporte para un columpio, que fue la primera zona de juegos autogestionada. Al cabo de pocos días, un vecino sorprendido denunció la extraña aparición del contenedor con columpio. La policía llamó al teléfono inscrito en el contenedor y el ciudadano responsable de su instalación tuvo que comparecer en comisaría para presentar los documentos y licencias pertinentes. La Gerencia Municipal de Urbanismo desestimó la denuncia, ya que el ciudadano había cumplido con todos los requisitos establecidos en la normativa municipal: el contenedor era de colores llamativos, su instalación no entorpecía la circulación por la vía pública, y en él se identificaba de forma clara a su propietario. Además, los técnicos de la Gerencia no encontraron argumentos legales que impidiesen la utilización del contenedor con una función distinta a la de recogida de materiales de construcción.].

[491] http://www.recetasurbanas.net/index.php?idioma=ESP&REF=1&ID=0003

These two works of Cirugeda acquire a political meaning to the extent that they bring out the discrepancy between the "parasitized" artifacts (which are not architectural to start off with) and the function assigned to them (which is architectural). They are, in a certain way, similar to a readymade. Any person who observes one of these works will be aware of this discrepancy and will understand that an *appropriation* has taken place. They will not observe the work based on the same framework of values that common sense determines to be appropriate in order to consider a "project of architecture", which is based on the assumption that a team has dedicated their time to designing a form. What they will notice is the "*administrative* manner how the architectural artifact was obtained".

As I mentioned, in "The Author as Producer" Benjamin does not refer to administrative procedures, such as those used by Cirugeda. But I think that the projects that I have just described would be better understood if, *before asking "what is their attitude to the relations of production of our time?", we asked "what is their position in them?". This question allows determining the role of the work within the production relationships of a period's architecture*.

All these works by Cirugeda, in as far as their political dimension touches upon direct personal relationships, based on individual contact, also illustrate what it is to "act at the level of *micro-politics*". Political stances in Cirugeda's projects does not relate directly to the "role of construction within the capitalist system as a whole", which Tafuri tells us about. They are less abstract. They deal with the specificity of the intervention context and depend on direct personal relationships. It is through this scale of intervention – the scale of the *specific* – that these works relate to the "role of construction within the capitalist system as a whole".

In this way, a relationship can be established between Cirugeda's work and the type of interventions that Tschumi calls "exemplary actions". These form a typology of architectural practices with a political aim that Tschumi establishes in the context of his own activity, during the late 1960s, early 1970s. In an effort to merge the role of the critic with that of the revolutionary, Tschumi defines two critical strategies, or two modes of architectural production, which he calls, respectively, "exemplary actions" and "counter-project". About the first category he explains:

> "Exemplary actions" act as both the expression of and the catalyst for the environmental crisis, while they combine, in a guerrilla tactic, useful immediacy with exemplarity, everyday life with awareness. (...) But above all, the purposes of the exemplary action are demystification and propaganda; it means to reveal that the capitalist organization of space destroys all collective space in order to develop division and isolation, and that it is possible to build fast and cheaply with building methods that are in contradiction with the economic logic of the system. (...) The purpose is, therefore, not merely the realization of an object built for itself, but also the revelation through building of realities and contradictions of society.[492]

[492] Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, pp. 10-11.

It is evident from this discourse that he comes from a historical context quite different to Cirugeda's. Terms such as "guerrilla" and "propaganda", or the way he refers to the public space, belong to a kind of revolutionary rhetoric which is not characteristic of the turn of the century. However, except for those differences, Tschumi 's explanation applies perfectly to the works of Cirugeda, as well as to the readymade greenhouses of Lacaton & Vassal.

With regard to the counter-project, Tschumi explains:

> "Counterdesign" can be described as a desperate and nihilistic attempt to use one particular feature of architectural expression, with all its cultural values and connotations. It is desperate in that it relies on the weakest of all architectural means, the plan, since we have defined that, by nature, no built object could ever have an effect on the socioeconomic structure of a reactionary society. It is nihilistic in that its only role is to translate the pessimistic forecast of the intentions of the holders of financial power into an architectural statement. This approach considers that the plan's weakness may only be apparent. As the plan is meant to be the end product, it acquires and additional freedom that no capital-bound built piece ever had. Its role is not to design a social alternative that would soon be mystified by the power groups that implement it, but simply to comprehend the official forces in the area, to predict their future and to translate them in graphical terms for explanation's sake.[493]

This second strategy, which involves the production of projects which are unrealisable and only serve to expose the socioeconomic conditions to which they are subject, can also be identified with works I mentioned in this chapter, specifically the *No-Stop City* and *Monumento Continuo* (or also with the *Exodus* project, which I will speak about later. Although I do not discuss these two works specifically with regard to production, the *No-Stop City* and the *Monumento Continuo* also focus on the logic of the political system which architecture serves.

Both types of strategy defined by Tschumi can thus be used as a reference to distinguish two types of work within the universe of the works that constitute "taking a stand" regarding the general political context:

- Exemplary actions act "in a positive way" and their aim is a practical situation, i.e., they are restricted to a very specific scope of action. At best, they can aspire to build models, as the name "exemplary actions" itself suggests.
- The counter-project focuses the system as a whole, but acts "in a negative way". It is unrealisable, it does not propose any model for intervention, and, to that extent, renounces the possibility of *effective* change in the context it refers to.

As I have stated since the beginning, the object of this dissertation is the plausible project design — not the dystopian. Here, I discuss dystopias such as the *No-Stop City* and the *Monumento Continuo* only in as far as they contribute to the discussion about projects. Therefore, "exemplary actions" can be considered the most political outcome that an actual construction can bring about with regard to productive systems and, consequently, the political and economic systems underlying those productive systems.

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[493] *Ibidem*, p. 12.

Of the political issues involved in the practice of architecture that I propose to identify, the two that I have already mentioned are the most abstract. They deal with the ideological conjuncture of the project and not with the project itself (although, as I have argued, production can be reflected in the project).

Next, I wish to identify three other political aspects of architecture that, unlike the previous two, are directly related to the characteristics of the projects and artifacts:

(3) the representative role of architectural artifacts;

(4) the devices that organise space and their functional/symbolic implications;

(5) the category "architecture" and the factors that enhance the artistic value of the works involved in it.

The first of these aspects – the representational function that buildings can perform – is the one usually associated to the relationship between architecture and politics. The reason for this lies, firstly, in the fact that representativeness is based precisely on the evidence and impact of the signs which the building presents. Symmetry is a recurrent feature of the most classical representative architecture, but an even more universal characteristic is, without a doubt, the large scale of the construction. Large doors, large buildings, large squares, large axes – these are elements that appear in the monumental architecture of almost all cultures to create effects such as "awe" or "astonishment" in those who experience them. This is not information that needs to be scrutinised. They are characterised by ostentation.

On the other hand, the monumentality is easily associated to the relationship between architecture and politics, also because it is one of the most instrumentalised political aspects, namely by "politicians" themselves. Erecting buildings and occupying the territory are demonstrations of power in the action itself, as well as a privileged way of perpetuating the image of that power. It's the instrumentalisation of *Firmitas*.

Representativeness is, in itself, outside the scope of the *self-reflexive*. It consists in attaching the factuality of a construction to an authority, an institution or a framework of values. A *symbolic* meaning is attributed to the work – which by definition is foreign to conceptual operativity, and which, on the other hand, constitutes standard practice and not a phenomenon that reveals the mechanisms underlying that practice. Therefore, I will not address the theme of representativeness. Nevertheless, I would like to use it as a starting point for the development of two lines of reasoning. These will lead to the two political aspects of the project that I still wish to address. In that sense, two questions arise:

- To what extent do projects acquire symbolic meaning through the morphology itself, and to what extent does that meaning result from use, or from how forms influence use? This question requires addressing the devices that organise space and their functional/symbolic implications. I will argue that only to the extent that form and politics are no longer mediated by a phenomenon of symbolisation and unite under the single banner of the "layout of actions and individuals" can projects be the subject of self-reflection.
- To what extent are symbolic meanings relative and only analysed according to a certain culture, and

> to what extent are they absolute or universal? This question requires addressing the category "architecture" and the factors of valuation of the work involved therein.

In this way, I will start by referring to the frontier between the meaning of forms and the meaning forms gain through use. For that purpose, I would like to consider a statement by Bernard Tschumi about the political value of space. In a retrospective text about his work, and specifically referring to the 1970s, Tschumi summarises:

> (...) an architectural space per se (space before its use) was politically neutral: an asymmetrical space, for example, was no more or no less revolutionary or progressive than a symmetrical one. (It was said at the time that there was no such thing as socialist or fascist architecture, only architecture in a socialist or fascist society.)[494]

From Tschumi's point of view, space in itself is not capable of embodying a political meaning. The author considers it politically neutral. However, as he explains while still referring to the 1970s, architecture may acquire an effective political meaning through *use*.

In fact, use is far more consequent in political terms than space is. The same building can serve as the headquarters of the political police of a totalitarian regime and later as the headquarters of a social reintegration organisation. For example, *Villa Tugenhat*, by Mies van der Rohe – an icon for libertarian modern architecture – served as headquarters for the Gestapo. One would look at that same building in those two situations and find very different symbolic values, although its form remains unchanged. Politics concerns individuals' behaviours and how they relate to each other. However, Tschumi gives a very specific meaning to the term "use". The political role Tschumi claims for architecture is related to the possibility of developing actions that are subversive and impressive enough to become news in the media. He mentions a building erected in three days by students of the École des Beaux Arts, in a Parisian suburb, using materials "borrowed" from nearby building sites – an initiative that took place at the end of 1968.

Tschumi does not refer to the characteristics of the actual artifact. He considers the contexts of politics and form in a *disjunctive* manner. His attitude is not that of Tafuri's, which is based on the *disjunction between politics and practice*, but rather is the advocacy of a practice in which there is a *disjunction between politics and form*. Tschumi is following a trajectory that takes his practice beyond the project – a trajectory that leads him, for some time, to fictional activism, to the production of flyers, posters, films, etc. and, in short, to a *disjunction between politics and practice* similar to that of Tafuri.

To the *disjunction between politics and form,* which I identified with Tschumi's beliefs in the 1970s, I would now like to contrast the perspective of Bruno Zevi. In the manifest of the Associazone per l'Architettura Organica, (Association for Organic Architecture) which he founded in 1945, Zevi writes:

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[494] *Ibidem*, p. 8.

> Organic architecture is a social, technical, and artistic activity whose purpose is to create the environment for a new, democratic civilization; it envisages an architecture for man, one built on a human scale in accordance with man's intellectual, psychological, and contemporary needs as a member of society. Organic architecture is thus the opposite of monumental architecture, which was used to create the state mythology.[495]

Tschumi and Zevi say diametrically opposite things. Tschumi refers specifically to the symmetry/asymmetry of space as irrelevant, and Zevi refers to monumentality as relevant – which does not constitute a direct contradiction. But Zevi could just as well advocate asymmetry as one of the principles of his "organic architecture", as he does in *Linguaggio Moderno dell'Architettura* (The Modern Language of Architecture)[496], and the contrast would be absolute.

For Zevi, the possibility that architecture fulfils a political role does not involve disruptive actions such as those proposed by Tschumi. From a modern perspective, Zevi has an ideal of an *ab initio* reconstruction of the world, which he wants architecture to abide by. He advocates a revolutionary architecture as opposed to a reactionary architecture, and the central factor of his disciplinary program is precisely use. He advocates that use should replace form as the crucial theme of architecture. Spaces should be favourable to the physical and psychological wellbeing of individuals to the detriment of any rigid idea of "order". The new forms for a new free society should be freed from the precepts of representative architecture (symmetry, axiality, monumental scale, etc.) which is typical of authoritarian regimes.

Zevi establishes a correspondence between social freedom and freedom of architectural forms. In this way, a disjunction between form and politics does not exist anymore. But there is another type of disjunction. In addition, Zevi proposes a correspondence between a form that symbolises and a symbolised framework of political values – a *correspondence,* not a *coincidence*. Architectural artifacts do not need to fulfil a representative or symbolic role to be political. The organisation of space is the organisation of everyday life that takes place in it – which is purely political. From the scale of the devices connecting rooms in a house to the scale of the territory, architecture reflects a framework of values, conditioning the behaviour of individuals. Michel Foucault fully demonstrates this when he describes Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon [85]. As a matter of fact, more than explain how the spaces of the Panopticon are articulated in order to establish certain power relations, Foucault considers that architectural apparatus have the capacity to reveal the actual mechanisms of power.

Unlike what happens when architecture is symbolic, the Panopticon does not have to be interpreted in light of some code or a given cultural context. It does not signify. It works. In it *there isn't a disjunction between form and politics.* They are one and the same.

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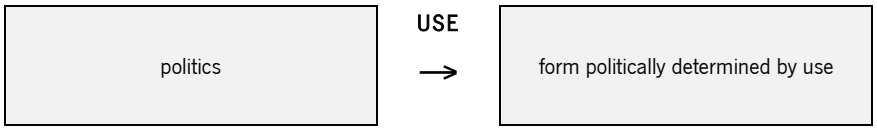
[495] Tournikiotis, *The Historiography of Modern Architecture*, p. 55.
[496] Bruno Zevi, "El Lenguage Moderno de la Arquitectura: Guia al Código Anticlásico", in *Leer, Escribir, Hablar Arquitectura*, trans. Roser Berdagué, Barcelona: Ediciones Apóstrofe, 1999, pp. 13-217 [originally published in 1973, developing the perspective mentioned initially in *Verso un'Architettura Organica* (Towards an Organic Architecture), from 1945].

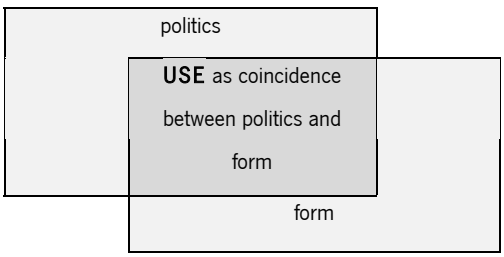
This takes us to the fourth political aspect of architecture that I have identified. But before I start discussing it, I propose to summarise the three types of relations between form and politics, or between form and use, which I have identified using a diagram.

Tschumi's point of view: form *per se* is not political

Tschumi's point of view: use gives form a political meaning



Zevi's point of view: due to political conviction, form is determined by use (a fact that gives form political meaning)



point of view based on Foucault: form is political and politics translates into form

(4) the devices that organise space and their functional/symbolic implications

A *device* is a special way of locating and interrelating the different parts of an apparatus. Specifically in an architectural device, those interrelated parts are spaces. To the extent that the organisation of space requires the organisation of individuals and actions, and reflect or determine frameworks of social values, it is political. This is true for any space. Monique Eleb and Anne Debarre describe how houses evolve through the distribution of spaces and the devices which, within them, translate and implement a set of social differences established at the heart of the family (husband/wife, parents/children, master/servants,

public/private, etc.)[497]. In the so called "functionalist" architecture, the purpose of the devices is the mechanistic optimization of actions. Aldo van Eyck advocates the creation of "intervals" of transition between spaces – called "*inbetween*" (*between* or *common to* two entities) – often without an obvious function, in order to provide margins of comfort, spontaneous appropriation or socialisation[498]. City walls protect a parcel of land from the exterior, allowing access to some, and denying access to others. However, not all these devices have a self-reflexive scope. Therefore, the question here is: what are the distinguishing features of a device with a self-reflexive scope?

In very general terms one can say that a certain *spatial device* becomes self-reflexive when, at the same time, it is a *device for raising awareness*. This requires its placement in a situation that encourages reflexive observation – a situation in which it either becomes extremely obvious or in which a discrepancy occurs between "what would be expected" and "what is presented". (Naturally, "what would be expected" can only be considered according to a certain cultural context.)

The generation of "young architects" of the 1990s offers many examples of projects in which the layout of functional units becomes a theme and is given expression. It is a strategy that belongs to so-called "diagrammatic architecture" and is associated with the literalness that I have associated to the transparency of the work in relation to the operative universe in which it was created. The project is designed as an "assembling game", in which the pieces correspond to parts of the program, and that game is expressed literally in the form of the project. Sometimes, the manner in which the pieces are arranged acquires a political dimension – these are the cases that concern us here.

The projects of *Double House* [28 . 29 . 30] and of the collective housing building *Berlin Voids* [25 . 26], by the Dutch MVRDV collective, are examples of that. In both, the borders between neighbours are the theme of the project. The combination of houses for different families is salvaged from a mere juxtaposition and made complex and meaningful. As I said, in each house the volume of the "house next door" is made present and crucial for the configuration of spaces. Both buildings have glass façades so that the surfaces (ceilings and walls), which in cross-section define the frontier between the houses, move forward to reach those façades and become also part of the "design" of their respective elevations (a strategy used by Le Corbusier in *Villa à Carthage*, from 1928).

I have also mentioned the work of the Japanese duo SANAA due to its diagrammatic profile. These architects state that their projects originate precisely in a speculative exercise based on the relative arrangement of the various functions, or of the spaces created for the various functions, which are envisioned in the program [82 . 83]. That claim does not always acquire a totally political dimension, but I can

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[497] Monique Eleb with Anne Debarre, *Architectures de la Vie Privée: XVIIe-XIXe Siècles*, Paris: Éditions Hazan/Bruxelles: A. A. M., 1999 [originally published: Bruxelles: A. A. M., 1989].

[498] Francis Strauven, *Aldo van Eyck: The Shape of Relativity*, Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura, 1998, pp. 354-360.

mention an example where that happens as part of family relationships – the project of the *S-House*[499] [84]. The house is enclosed within a parallelepiped with two floors. The crucial element for the organisation of its interior is the fact that it is designed for a family of two nuclei of different age-groups. The house has a common area in the upper floor and private areas in the ground floor. In order to accentuate the privacy in this floor, the architects chose to increase the distance between the spaces of each nucleus. Unlike the model of a central corridor (that would makes the distance shorter), in the *S-House* the corridor is peripheral. One needs to walk around the divisions, which are in the centre, in order to move from one to another.

If closing off spaces (with walls, for example) and establishing a hierarchy of spaces according to a certain system of relations or power (of which the Panopticon is a paradigm) is political, then their absence can also be political. This is what Aureli demonstrates when he examines the *No-Stop City* by Archizoom Associati.

The differentiation of spaces is one of the elementary roles of architectural artifacts. As I mentioned before, in the *No-Stop City*, that role is limited to the isolation of the interior in relation to the exterior. Otherwise, it is excluded so that function is performed by more mobile elements and is always provisional. It is not a matter of libertarian intention to allow the space to be freely manipulated by those who inhabit it (as Price advocates). Instead, it is a matter of complying in a literal manner with capitalist logic itself. As I stated, this "direct representation" is not symbolic. The project "represents" whereby the device is necessary for the "represented" social phenomena – a device characterised by the extinction of the spatial demarcations typical of architecture. The homogeneity that allows everything and condenses everything, which I have identified with exhibition floors in IKEA stores, is thus created. Architecture is just a neutral base for the dynamics of capitalism. Aureli says,

> (...) for Archizoom it was clear that the Fordist assembly line was undergone a process of transformation in which the rationality of the plan was being replaced by a much more decentralized and pervasive system of production and consumption. In this scenario, where the city was endlessly disposable and consumable, and where its form and organization were consequently less controllable, both architecture and its opposite, planning, were seen by Archizoom as completely inadequate instruments for action.[500]

Aureli associates the capitalist logic, taken to its limit in the *No-Stop City*, with the notion of "bad infinity", defined by Hegel, and which he summarises as

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[499] Since the original title of the project is in Japanese, I have translated in similar style to the English (*S-House*) and the Spanish (*Casa-S*) translations.

[500] Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture within and against Capitalism, New York: Buell Center/Princeton Architectural Press, 2008,* p. 78.

> (...) the infinity that, in spite of its attempted negation of the finite – the fact that things and events have a form, a limit, and an existence – cannot avoid incarnation in the finite, which pushes toward a perennial, compulsive repetition of itself.[501]

In this way, he builds a perspective according to which the pernicious "absence of limit", which is characteristic to capitalism, is associated to the architectural "absence of limit" – a setting that *No-Stop City* perfectly illustrates. In that sense, *No-Stop City* is, as Aureli observes, the best architectural translation not only of capitalism in general but specifically of the development of the capitalist logic of production and consumption characteristic of post-fordism[502]. The constant adaptability and transiency that characterise the abstract[503] universe of the post-fordist production, as well as the speed of consumption that goes with it, translate into a kind of "anti-architecture" with the utmost instability. Aureli contrasts an "absolute architecture" against this paradigm of instability and absence of limit which, in its condition of finite form[504], constitutes

> (...) the example for a city no longer driven by the ethos of expansion and inclusion but by the positive idea of limits and confrontation. By clearly exposing their limits, architectural parts confront each other and form an agonistic plurality, becoming a site where judgment through difference is again possible. Here the formal clearly becomes the political essence of the city.[505]

Against the usual analyses of architecture of Mies van der Rohe, Aureli identifies an eminently political dimension in the plinths of projects such as the *Haus Riehl* (Riehl House), and the Barcelona Pavilion, the *Seagram Building*, or the *Neue Nationalgalerie* (New National Gallery) – the politics of *demarcation* as opposed to the politics of *dissolution* and *relativism*[506].

Aureli mentions other examples when addressing this theme. I will highlight one which, although it is not as executable as a project, constitutes an act of territorial demarcation with an obvious self-reflexive dimension. I refer to *Exodus or The Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture*, a "project" conceived by Rem

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[501] Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, pp. 16-17.

[502] Paolo Virno defines this period, saying that: "The informality of communicative behaviour, the competitive interaction typical of a meeting, the abrupt diversion that can enliven a television program (in general, everything which it would have been dysfunctional to rigidity and regulate beyond a certain threshold) has become now, in the post-Ford era, a typical trait of the *entire* realm of social production." Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, p. 59. See also: Virno & Hardt (eds.), *Radical Thought in Italy*; Kirn (ed.), *Post-Fordism and its Discontents*; Gielen & De Bruyne (eds.), *Being an Artist in Post-Fordist Times*.

[503] In this context, production is no longer centred around the material question of "manufacturing" and is inserted into an operative universe characterized by the flexible management of action. The project's focus on the theme of "organisation of actions", to the detriment of "definition of form", is referred to by Aureli as a point where Tafuri and Archizoom converge, despite the historical opposition of the former in relation to the latter. In particular, Aureli identifies a parallel between the interpretation of *Hochhausstadt* proposed by Tafuri and that proposed by Archizoom. He argues that *No-Stop City* can be viewed as a development of Tafuri's interpretation of *Hochhausstadt* – "the city as a continuous system rather than a collection of objects." To which he adds: "Foreshadowing later theories of media and immaterial production, Branzi emphasized that if the city was integrated into the cycle of production, then producing it was only a matter of programming, not of designing, its built structures." Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy*, p. 77.

[504] In particular, Aureli refers to the thought of the political philosopher Carl Schmitt.

[505] Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, p. 42.

[506] In fact, by characterising post-Fordist productive mechanisms, Aureli refers to the attributes of the information age which I associated to conceptual art, namely, to the *administrative* universe to which its operativity can be associated. I believe it is possible to consider some conceptual art phenomena from that perspective. The tautology itself can be interpreted as a type of emptying whose ideological overtones tend towards relativism – towards an absence of "taking a stance". However, I will not engage in that discussion. I confine myself to the interpretation of those phenomena by associating them mainly with an operative change or, at best, an epistemological change, i.e., in the light of the entry of the Western world into the information age.

Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis, with the collaboration of Madelon Vriesendorp and Zoe Zenghelis, in 1971-72 [86]. The structure was designed to be superimposed on the city of London. It is formed by two large parallel walls that encircle a long "Strip" (as the authors call it), inside which a series of quadrangular sectors are aligned in succession. According to the text that accompanies the proposal, this is where, gradually, the inhabitants of London will come to live, abandoning the city, which will therefore become a ruin. Before they have access to the various programs they will follow in the "Strip", the inhabitants go through reception areas, the third being the "London Area" – an area in which the buildings serve as accommodation during a period of adjustment. For this purpose, the John Nash blocks are chosen, thus transformed into a readymade area.

In fact, *Exodus* results in two re-contextualisation phenomena. The more obvious one is: the re-contextualisation of an area of the old city of London as part of a new work. The other concerns the city's re-contextualisation as a whole. The limits of *Exodus* are also the limits between a pre-existing context and the place from which a new perspective is built on this context – on the city. *Exodus* is the configuration of a place where one can see the city of London from a distance. The spatial limits established by the "Strip" also fulfil that role. I believe that this particular notion of limit is shared by Aureli, when he states that Mies's plinths constitute a critical observation point of the surrounding city, and by Tafuri, when he states that Renaissance buildings inaugurate a critical examination of the medieval city. The limit thus becomes a device for self-reflection (in as far as it deals with "architecture about architecture"), but focusing on the exterior of the work, that is, the exterior of that limit. More than just a physical perspective over the landscape, the work offers a *self-reflexive perspective* on the city.

(5) the category "architecture" and the factors that enhance the artistic value of the works involved in it.

Finally, I will enunciate the last political aspect of project practice which I consider may be subject of self-reflection, whereas in this case, what is understood as "political" does not concern the architecture's exterior but lies within its scope. For that purpose I will return to the question I raised regarding representativeness: to what extent are symbolic meanings relative and may only be considered according to a certain culture and to what extent are they absolute or universal? I raised this question as a first step in a second line of reasoning – in which I would address the category "architecture" and the factors of artistic valuation of the works it implies. This is the theme I will now address to end this sub-chapter.

I would like to start by examining the possibility that the authority, institution or framework of social values intended to be represented in a building might not coincide with the formidable "monumentality". Discretion, austerity, scarcity or ephemerality are also instruments of representation. First of all, they are values *per se*. Other than religious contexts, (which sometimes determine that constructions are reduced to their essence), social status can also be represented by simplicity. Discretion, as a bourgeois value, is

opposed to vulgar exhibition. It determines the appearance of houses, such as those of Adolf Loos.

With regard to how the architectural form becomes a reflection of such a framework of values, a distinction (similar to the distinction between the painter and the cameraman) can be made between two possibilities: (1) the work is austere or precarious as a symbol of the values it represents – which means that it belongs to a universe of metaphor foreign to conceptualism (I referred to this phenomenon in art); (2) the work is austere or precarious because it is strictly functional. It follows from the question: "Why make the construction more sophisticate than is strictly necessary for it to fulfil its function?" This second possibility is the one that I wish to examine because, as I argued, it can be ascribed to the *conceptual* field.

At first glance, the possibility that the work is strictly functional is purely pragmatic. However, the option of engaging in this process in the context of "authorship architecture" cannot be reduced to pragmatism. This pragmatism is not for those who do not consider the field of artistic intentions. It is not as innocent as that. It represents assuming a stance, which is as deliberate as is the fact that it challenges the factors of valuation of architectural works viewed according to common sense. On the one hand, there are rational motives that can lead to that type of informal structure (Lacaton & Vassal, for example, build cheaply in order to build more, that is, to offer more space). On the other hand, there is the framework of values which allows that type of attitude to be recognised to the detriment of a more conservative, or more common, framework of values. It is because of this – and only this – that the work can acquire a self-reflexive scope. *It is this kind of work which best brings out the fact that the meaning of any work depends on a cultural context, regarding which it acquires an interrogative nature.*

In fact, all the projects referred to in this dissertation fulfil this self-reflexive role.

- Works of Process art interrogate the project as a subjective practice, shifting subjectivity from a formal reverie to the form-generating device. Therefore, they interrogate the *locus* of "authorship" in the work. Process art ideas are a particular kind of idea, but in all conceptual works (to the extent that they are enunciable) authorship is shifted from the formal fancies to the "poetics of the enunciation" – which questions the values traditionally used to determine the artistic value of works of architecture.
- When I addressed the "work as entity", I identified experiments concerning the mechanical and substantial qualities of the architectural work, the latter being understood as a constructive entity or as device. All those experiments depart from the constructive canons of the "*work of architecture* as artifact". They question the factors according to which the architectural device is understood as a material entity.
- The works I referred to in this sub-chapter that focus on productive aspects question architecture as a social practice – as a framework of social interactions within which certain agents have certain tasks to fulfil according to certain technical competencies. They question, namely, the procedures which the architect uses to fulfil his task as "project designer" as well as constructive procedures.

- The works I referred to in this sub-chapter that focus on the devices that organise and condition the actions question the role of architecture as a support for everyday life.

The fact common to all of them is that they fit into the category that I am trying to establish. They all question the factors that determine or regulate their status as "work of architecture", and may even determine the institutional definition of "architecture" itself. Unlike art, it is not about *institutions* such as museums, publications, or others which, via their action and via the discourse they produce, legitimise certain factors related to the assessment of the work. Instead, it is about the factors themselves. It is about the *concepts* that serve as reference for the assessment of the work or, as I said, ultimately, the *concept* of "architecture" itself.

In this way, an architectural practice is defined, which, on one hand, acquires political meaning *as art* (the specifically artistic conventions and their own ideological dimension put into question), and, on the other hand, acquires artistic meaning *as politics* (the "artistic nature" of the work resides in its self-reflexive scope).

In 1980, in an interview with Gilles Dorfles, Branzi recalls, referring to the Archizoom group, that

> All the avant-garde work we performed was destined to create a new projectual platform, new and greater steps of freedom for invention, a greater conscience about the relativity of all canonical design. (...) When we would speak of the death of the Architect, many believed that it was a proposal to return to the cave and primitive cultures. In reality, we had jointed an important line of the Modern Movement: Hannes Meyer would speak of "architecture which was no longer architecture", Ludwig Hilberseimer of "a city without quality", Le Corbusier himself a "machine for living". What I mean with this is that the reduction of architecture is part of a significant part of modern architectural thought.[507]

In the context of self-reflexive practices, the project becomes a device for questioning its inherent *conceptual* conditions, and, eventually, by escaping those conditions, it invents other definitions or practices of "architecture".

[507] Andrea Branzi, *Moderno Postmoderno Millenario: Scritti Teorici 1972-1980*, Torino/Milano: Studio Forma Alchymia, 1980, p. 7 [(...) tutto il lavoro d'avanguardia che noi facevamo, era destinato a generare una nuova piattaforma progettuale, dei nuovi e maggiori gradi di libertà all'invenzione, una maggiore coscienza sulla relatività di tutto il design canonico. (...) Quando noi parlavamo di morte dell'architettura, molti hanno creduto di capire la proposta di un ritorno alle caverne e alla cultura primitiva. In realtà noi ci collegavamo a un filone importante del Movimento Moderno: Hannes Meyer parlava di "un'architettura che non è più architettura", Ludwig Hilberseimer di "una città senza qualità", lo stesso Le Corbusier di una "machinna per abitare". Voglio dire che la riduzione dell'architettura fa parte di gran parte del pensiero dell'architettura moderna.].

“lack of quality” as a strategy and “doing nothing” as a paradigm: ways of doing nothing in architecture

Disillusionment is the force that drives self-reflection. In short, this is what I advocated with regard to conceptual art. As I said before, in architecture things are not that simple. The effect of disillusionment has limits which are imposed by the utilitarian *raison d’être* of artifacts and the inevitably representative function they fulfil within the social sphere.

I will address the “ways of doing nothing” based on a diagram similar to the one I used for conceptual art. In that sense, I will refer to the same three strategies I identified earlier – dislocation, indeterminacy and absence. However, because in architecture the “presentation of the work” is not an issue, I will narrow the stages during which it is possible to use these strategies down to two – the conception of the work (the aspects related to the definition of form in the abstract sense) and the production of the work (the aspects related to the definition of the work as a material entity and the subject of the type of manipulation called “inhabiting”).

		stages	
		1. **conception** of the work	2. **production** of the work
Operative strategies	**dislocation**	form results from the appropriation of certain data	the work results from the appropriation of a certain artifact
	indeterminacy	form results from a random process	the work results from decisions taken by whoever inhabits it
	absence	_	the work results from change in status of a certain artifact

conception of the work

The first possibility I put forward is: **the architect does not create an enunciation for the project: he appropriates one that already exists**. The dislocation of a given content to the scope of a project has one limitation: that content has to be able to serve the purpose of the project. That which is dislocated must be capable of being transformed into a work of architecture. I will mention two of the many examples I presented in this dissertation, as I believe they illustrate this possibility.

The first example is the set of projects from the MVRDV group based on the idea of “*datascape*” – which, in a 1966 text, Winy Maas defines as:

> Psychological issues, anti-disaster patterns, lighting regulations, acoustic treatments. All these manifestations can be seen as

'scapes' of the data behind it.

Extremities If 'progress' remains the main reason for 'research', the hypothesis remains the most effective way to deal with it. In order to understand the behaviour of massiveness, we have to push it to the limits and adopt this 'extremizing' as a technique of architectural research. Assuming a possible maximization (the word 'maximum' already implies rules), society will be confronted with the laws and by-laws that it has set up and that are extrapolated with an iron logic.[508]

This literal application of the rules, taken to their final consequences, is a strategy already referred to in chapter I-2, in relation to the automatism of conceptual processes. At the time, in addition to presenting the projects *The Shadow Town* [18 . 19] and *Noisescape* [20 . 21], both from the MVRDV group, as an example of that strategy, I also referred to Ferriss' skyscrapers [16] as a paradigmatic case.

Both Ferriss and MVRDV use data provided by the context. This is not formal data, like that used in the context of neo-rationalism (which could be considered here were it not for the objections that I raised previously regarding their "conceptual" nature). They are more abstract. But, in any case, what occurs is the adoption of data from a typical element belonging to the architectural project – the location.

Also in chapter I-2, on the subject of automatism of conceptual processes, I identified Friedman's *Flatwriter* [31 . 32] as representative of a different paradigm. **The architect does not create a form for the project: he creates a device that will determine that form based on factors which are external to his authorship, and are, to that extent, "random".** It is necessary to establish a distinction with regard to what is understood here as random. Randomness may be radical, as is the case of the *Berlin Voids* project, or it may be independent of the architect's will, simply because the decision is passed to the hands of another agent. This is what happens in *Flatwriter*. Both are housing projects. Both aim to multiply the number of dwellings. However, whereas the *Berlin Voids* are the result of an effectively random process, the *Flatwriter* is the result of the sum of the decisions of the inhabitants of the dwellings. In any case, the architect waives his "choice" but, while in the *Berlin Voids* the strategy is common to various scopes of artistic practice – the assignment of the definition of form to "randomness" – in *Flatwriter* an agent of architecture specific to architecture is used instead – the inhabitant. The decision is random in relation to the control that the architect has over the form of his project, but it is not random *per se*, because it is the result a deliberate choice by the inhabitant. In projects of this type, the authorial strategy remains under the control of the architect. What happens is that, in the context of that "authorship strategy", the way is open for a decision that is external to him.

This strategy is particularly appropriate to architectural projects. Like Ferriss and the MVRDV collective (which I mentioned in the previous item) using *data* from the architectural project itself – the location – Friedman assigns the process of configuration of the project to an *agent* specific to the architectural project itself – the inhabitant.

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[508] MVRDV, *Farmax*, pp. 102-103.

I have considered, in the context of conceptual art, a third possibility – that the artist does not create any content for the work and that the work comes close to not having content. I provided the example of Kosuth's tautological works. Similarly to what I argued in relation to the emptying of the work, I believe that there is no such thing as an "emptied architecture", or a tautological architecture.

production of the work

The first possibility I will consider is that of an architectural readymade.

The use of existing structures is archaic. It goes back to the use of caves as shelters. Caves provide a building which is "ready" enough, capable of surrounding with "walls" and "ceiling" and configuring a "doorway". In the contemporary world, caves can still be used, but standards of comfort require them to be completed with further construction. The photographic work that Alec Soth compiles in his book *Broken Manual*[509] provides an account of this type of buildings [93]. This is also the case with available natural structures which are more incomplete and therefore require additional building, such as for example the Portuguese village of Monsanto. The mountainside is strewn with large boulders and all that was needed was to build around them so that they would become the walls and ceilings of the houses. In addition to natural structures, built structures are also suitable as outer shells for interior spaces. An example is the use of the interior space of arches, whose apparent function is structural though their concavity is proven to serve as shelter [92].

These procedures are infrequent in authorship works. I could mention some examples of the transformation of ruins (some were turned into *Folies*) by Eduardo Souto Moura, which are more than a mere "rehabilitation", but do not get to acquire a self-reflexive dimension. In these works "what is done with the appropriated element" is discoursive enough to be considered an enunciation. "Reassign a function to the ruin by adding a lid" (*Reconversion of a Ruin in Gerês*, 1980), "empty the ruin so that it becomes a *Folie*" (*House in Baião*, 1990-1993) or "invert the internal and external sides of a building" (*Inn at Santa Maria do Bouro*, 1989-1997) are examples of this. However, these are manoeuvres that do not acquire a self-reflexive dimension. They may produce a romantic or ironic effect, but they do not question any disciplinary assumptions.

I believe that, in order to be able to consider the readymade in architecture, the dislocation needs to be more significant. The distance between the origin and the destination of what is appropriated needs to be greater. I propose two possibilities. The first is the closest to the concept of readymade in art, according to which the artist does not produce the work: he appropriates an object that already exists. To put this in the context of architecture, one could say that **the architect does not produce the work: he appropriates an object that already exists.** The greenhouses appropriated by Lacaton & Vassal [94 .

[509] Alec Soth & Lester B. Morrison, *Broken Manual*, London: Steidl, 2010.

95 . 96] are an example that is particularly close to the readymade as invented by Duchamp. The work is the result of (1) a choice and (2) a re-contextualisation.

S*quatting* can also be viewed as a practice of production of readymade. I that case, **the "architect" does not produce the work: he appropriates a work that already exists**. The process of re-contextualisation of the work does not involve its introduction into a new context, but only the act of using it for a new purpose. If, according to Al Held, "all conceptual art is just pointing at things", in architecture there is a possibility of "just inhabiting things".

This is also what happens when, instead of appropriation involving the general "inhabiting", it involves the enhancement of the appropriated artifact's performance. I am not referring to changes to the artifact itself, but the addition of supplementary elements that also determine a new function for "what already exists". Banham addresses this possibility and uses two concepts – "*gizmo*" and "*clip-on*". He defines "gizmo", a product he considers typically American, as

> (...) a small self-contained unit of high performance in relation to its size and cost, whose function is to transform some undifferentiated set of circumstances to a condition nearer human desires. The minimum of skill is required in its installation and use, and it is independent of any physical or social infrastructure beyond that by which it may be ordered from catalogue and delivered to prospective user.[510]

A *gizmo*, as a simple equipment to assemble and use, can be prepared for any artifact, allowing it to perform in a different way. Household appliances or infrastructural devices are examples of this. Regarding the concept of "clip-on", Banham explains it using the image of a motor that

> Can convert practically any floating object into a navigable vessel. A small concentrating package of machinery converts an undifferentiated structure into something having function and purpose[511]

In both cases, the added gizmo acts as a device of re-functionalisation. It transforms the pre-existing artifact into a new artifact with the same appearance but with a new function, i.e., transforming it into a readymade.

Before moving on to other "ways of doing nothing", I will just mention the fact that a readymade work of architecture raises a problem of acknowledgement which it shares with art: one can only look for artistic meaning in the work to the extent that the work is put in a situation where it is considered the result of an artistic procedure. In architecture, even when an object of this kind is not recognised as art, it fulfils its role as a support for the everyday life of those who inhabit it – this does not apply to art. But a work only acquires its full meaning after an institutional validation device pays attention to that *work* (in the material sense) as a *work* (in the artistic sense). This is true for the Lacaton & Vassal greenhouses, but even more so for *squatting*. The artistic meaning of the appropriated artifact – in this case an object that is not subject to

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[510] Reyner Banham, "The Great Gizmo", in *Design by Choice*, p. 110. [Originally published in *Industrial Design* 12 (September 1965), pp. 58-59.

[511] Reyner Banham, "A Clip-on Architecture", *Design Quarterly* 63 (1965), p. 10.

any dislocation – is only considered after the work is put in a situation where it is considered the result of an artistic procedure. More precisely, artistic meaning is only considered to the extent that use is presented as a procedure with an artistic dimension.

The next possibility I identified in the context of conceptual art was: the artist does not produce a work: he reorganises works that already exist. I do not think that this is possible for architectural artifacts. One can construct images by recombining images of existent artifacts, or conceive a project citing other projects by recombining them, but this has nothing to do with the possibility of effectively producing a work through combinational *productive* procedures. At most, the work may be formed by a set of elements designed to be combined, but this is a possibility I will only refer to later.

I will now refer to works that are the result of indeterminacy instead of dislocation. I will examine works whose configuration is indeterminate.

The first possibility is that the project does not define a fixed form. Among these works, those whose configuration is changed by factors external to human will and those which, once again, are based on the fact that architectural artifacts are destined for those who will inhabit them:

- **The architect does not define the form of the work: he only defines a device whose form is indefinitely self-changing, depending on external factors.** That is what happens in works such as Ito's *Tower of Winds* [76], and Diller + Scofidio 's *Blur Building* [73 . 74 . 75].
- **The architect does not define the form of the work: he leaves the decision to someone else**.

In as far as concerns this second possibility, it can be identified with several project strategies. Starting with the more limited scopes of action, I can mention two works – one by Hermann Hertzberger, the other by Alejandro Aravena of the Elemental team (with Alfonso Montero, Tomás Cortese and Emilio de la Cerda). Both projects involve leaving the work incomplete, letting their inhabitants complete it.

The Hertzberger project – *Diagoon Dwellings* [52 . 53] – part of the conception of a prototype for a house which, in 1970, is tried out in a set of eight units in Delft. Hertzberger leaves two situations to the decision of the inhabitants. One of them relates to the dividing line between interior and exterior, facing the garden. In each house, one part of the terrace continuing onwards from the sitting room, the connection of that terrace to the ground (about half a floor lower), as well as the remaining space under the slab stone have not been completed within the scope of the project. The inhabitants can choose whatever solution seems most appropriate to them. One similar thing can be seen also in as far as concerns the dividing line between the gardens. However, in this case, this is a process of negotiation whose limits can, respectively, be the absence of a division or a wall, providing more privacy.

Aravena's project consists in a group of low cost houses, in order to replace a group of illegal houses

in the area of *Quinta Monroy*, city of Iquique, in the Chilean desert [54 . 55]. It was a government initiative, and the work was completed in 2004. With a limited budget for land and construction, and wanting to guarantee housing for the 100 families, the team chose to build what was just a "starting point" for what would become houses of the future. The houses are economically arranged into rows, with building volumes alternating with free spaces for self-construction. Each house is therefore juxtaposed to a land parcel on the side which is occupied only by a slab which doubles as a cover for the ground floor and as a balcony. Each family can occupy this part of their land parcel with further construction according to their needs and their own capacity to build. On the other hand, the project does not include the cost of cladding. The houses are built without cladding or painting, because these construction components are less essential for the operation of the houses and can also be applied by the families with relative ease.

A step up the scale, I could mention the curved *redent* that Le Corbusier imagines in his plan of Algiers, during the Project "A" stage, from 1931 -1932. Le Corbusier proposes to create a large scale *Dom-ino* structure. He provides a series of superposed slabs, supported only by pillars, so that, functioning as artificial land parcels, they can be occupied by different houses, according to the preference of each individual [57]. The project consists in a large support of "artificial land" for several small projects.

Price presents a different strategy when he designs the *Fun Palace* or the *Inter-Action Centre* [62 . 63 . 64]. The work is not meant to be *completed*, but instead *manipulated*. It is a game.

Although with radically different ideological overtones, as I have already mentioned, *No-Stop City* [35 . 36] is also destined for manipulation by whoever inhabits it. As I explained, it is a support for the imponderable logic of production and consumption to determine the configurations under permanent change.

Finally, I propose to enunciate the most radical way of doing nothing: literally, **the architect does not do anything.**

In 1976, in an a radio interview, Banham states:

> (...) the basic approach is certainly one that appeals to me, a way of really not saying 'What kind of building do you want?' but almost of asking first of all, 'Do you really need a building?"[512]

Banham's position is in agreement with Price's, according to Alper Semih Alkan. Alkan refers to

> (...) Price's programmatic emphasis over physical requirements, which sometimes even caused him to decline project commissions by questioning the necessity of a building at its expense.[513]

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[512] Reyner Banham, BBC Radio 4 (5th November 1976), cited in Claude Lichtenstein and Thomas Schregenberger (eds.), *As Found: The Discovery of the Ordinary*, Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2001 [originally published in *Cedric Price, Architectural Association Works 2*, London: Architectural Association, 1984, p. 107.

[513] Alkan, "Architectural Representation Beyond Visualization", p. 130.

Banham and Price enunciate ethical, or even ontological principles that are not usually found in architecture. Doing nothing acquires the dimension of asking "what is architecture for?"[514] – a question as radically lucid as it is inconceivable from the commercial perspective of architecture studios. I end this chapter on the self-reflexive dimension that works of architecture can acquire with a reference to the 1996 Lacaton & Vassal project Place Léon Aucoc [97]. Following a survey among the neighbourhood's residents and against the expectations of the city's Mayor, the French architects adopted "the form the square already had" as a proposal for the square – an act paradoxically more disruptive than any intervention could ever be.

[514] I have borrowed the title of the seminar *Para que Serve a Arquitectura?* (What is Architecture for?) given by André Tavares and Pedro Bandeira, which arose due to a partnership between the publishers Dafne and the Minho University School of Architecture, which took place in Guimarães, in October 2006.

conclusion

Following the arguments developed in these four chapters and considering the conclusions that I successively reached, I would like to end this dissertation by returning to the question: can the operating model of conceptual art be applied within the scope of the architecture project?

Ultimately, it cannot. From the outset, I stated and reiterated that art and architecture are not comparable regarding specific aspects of the project. If the most essentialist definition of "work of art" can be addressed using abstraction in its philosophical sense, the definition of "work of architecture" presents itself as an empirical problem. In art, necessity cannot be argued because it is in art's nature to transcend the scope of necessity. In architecture, necessity (and all its political implications) is a fundamental assumption of the concept of "architecture". In absolute terms, the answer to the question is therefore, no.

However, there is another aspect to the arguments I developed. If, instead of *ontological* assumptions, the definition of "conceptual art" I proposed – an o*perative* definition – is considered, the answer to the question must be yes. There are multiple works that meet both operative conditions that I identified as defining of the "conceptual work", that is, works that are the literal translation of an idea (which implies, as I argued in chapter I-2, that they can be contained by that idea) and, simultaneously, perform a self-reflexive function. These are the works that I shall refer to next.

More specifically, I would like to return to the acknowledgment that the substantive emptying of the work is not possible and that a project has inevitable empirical dimensions that prevent that emptying (this is what I argued in chapter II-2) and ask: is it not possible, therefore, to empty a work of architecture of *determined* characteristics so that it is reduced to other *determined* characteristics that summarise the definition of "work of architecture"? Those works would respond particularly well to the two operative conditions that are defining of the "conceptual work".

Firstly, these are the most purely self-reflexive works because they seek the actual definition of "work of architecture". Although, in conceptual art, it is possible to distinguish between works that focus on more circumstantial aspects and works that focus on the definition of "art" itself, the works of architecture I will refer to next are closer to the latter type – those that come closest to finding an "essence" defining their own class.

This does not mean that the definitions conveyed by the works are definitive. Although it may seem semantically paradoxical, they are "non-definitive definitions". When I contrast "what is circumstantial" with "what is defining", I do not seek to exclude the possibility of definitions themselves being circumstantial. C*oncepts* are cultural constructs and, to that extent, are relative (because their meaning depends on a certain context of subjectivity) and temporary (because they may be perpetually revisited). As I argued, the transience of concepts is at the heart of conceptual practices. It is because it is *speculative* that the self-reflection that is conveyed and triggered by the work can acquire an artistic dimension.

Secondly, in so far as their scope is as global as the definition of "work of architecture" itself, the works I will refer to are not just limited to partial aspects of the project. They constitute the most complete enunciations. Strictly speaking, they may not be complete enunciations, but they are probably the most complete I was able to identify, and the ones that best combine the various aspects of the project around the same idea. As I argued in chapter I-2, an idea related solely to the material nature of the artifact does not by itself determine the configuration of that artifact. Conversely, an idea related solely to the spatial configuration of the artifact does not determine its material constitution. An idea becomes all the more complete as it becomes conjunctive by opposition to the disjunction of the various aspects of the project.

I believe this phenomenon of *conjunction* can be confirmed by the arguments that I presented in the previous chapter, around the various implications of self-reflection in the specific context of the architectural project. When I discussed the substantive emptying of the work, I concluded that it is an impossible task to fulfil because the architectural form is not subject to emptying. In other words, emptying does not occur because it is not possible to establish a *disjunctive* relationship between form (whose substance one wants to remove) and the various empirical aspects of the project (substantive). I then discussed self-reflection in relation to the political aspects of the project, and, once again, the *disjunction* proved to be adverse to the fulfilment of that self-reflection. More specifically:

- The social mission of architecture *per se*, seen as an independent aspect (i.e., *disjunct*) from the characteristics of the project as artistic product, cannot constitute an object of self-reflection.
- It is specially through technique that productive aspects can become subject to self-reflection within the project (I advocated this using Benjamin's "The Author as Producer" as a reference). This happens because technique is the operative territory in which form and production are brought together, i.e., are *made conjunct*.
- "Form" and "politics" can be the subject of self-reflection only in as far as they cease to be mediated by a phenomenon of symbolisation and become *conjunct* under the single theme of "disposition of actions and individuals" that results from the definition of *limits* for spaces.
- The political core of the project as an artistic practice corresponds to the actual values according to which it is conceived and considered. It is within the framework of those values that form and politics coincide, that is, are *made conjunct*.

Therefore, disjunction is contrary not only to the enunciability of the work (because if the "definition of what the work is" is divided across several aspects, it is harder to enunciate the work), but also to the type of self-reflection that leads to the definition of "project" itself (because the more unitary the definition, the more aspects of the project it includes at the same time).

Now that these assumptions have been clarified, I will examine the possible answers to the question "what is a work of architecture?" I believe the most immediate answer can be found in the statement that *a work*

of architecture defines an inhabitable device. This answer focuses on the artifact itself. The project is understood not just as "product" – the product of the architect's work – but also as a "product that defines another product", the latter being the artifact. It is a functionalist answer too. The artifact that is the focus of the project is defined based on its functional relevance. The question "what is a work of architecture?" is answered in the same way as would the question "what is the purpose of a work of architecture?". Two other statements can be inferred from this statement:

- A work of architecture is a device for the organisation of space. It establishes a spatial configuration.
- A work of architecture is a device for conditioning the environment. (The latter statement may seem more difficult to apply to open-air projects but, even for those, environmental conditioning is still present.)

To illustrate this concept of "project", the first work I propose to consider is Banham and Dallegret's *Environment-Bubble* [72]. *Environment-Bubble* is close to a "minimum" – not the minimum of *form* (because it does not focus on form, but the minimum of *matter* and a minimum of spatial configuration. It is the proposal of a habitacle with minimal materiality and spatiality. The issue addressed by Banham and illustrated by Dallegret is the possibility of readdressing the architectural artifact from a radically functional point of view. *Environment-Bubble* defines, around a nucleus of infrastructures, a portion of space – or a portion *of air* – with just a membrane isolating it from the air that surrounds it. On the other hand, the distancing from the traditional principles of construction, already present in Banham's mind when he creates the category "neo-brutalism", is taken to a new level of radicalism. The need for parietal elements ceases to exist and gives place to the reduction of construction to technological elements that fulfil the same conditioning function, but whose *hardware* is minimal. Additionally, the topological meaning of space, also identified by Banham in neo-brutalism, is radicalised to the point that the habitacle is shaped as a mere "interior space surrounding a centre", and separated from the exterior space. It is radicalised to the point that space is shaped by a unique surface, like the inside of a balloon.

I refer to *Environment-Bubble* as a representation of the possibility of self-reflection that is most directly focused on the *objecthood* of the architectural artifact. As the name suggests, by enunciating *Environment-Bubble* Banham proposes to define "work of architecture" as an **inhabitable device – environmental and configurative**. That is the environmental and configurative function that the artifact fulfils as an *object*.

As I said, this first answer focuses on the artifact itself. *The project is seen as a "product of the architect's work", and, above all, as a "product that defines another product – the latter being the artifact". I think that this is the narrowest thematic nucleus that a definition of "work of architecture" allows*. It is a direct result of the fact that the focus of the work of architecture is inevitability the artifact (the inevitability I discussed in chapter I-2).

Taking this first definition as a starting point, I will broaden the thematic scope of the definition of "work of architecture". For that purpose I would like to add two elements to the equation. I propose that: (1) the work of the architect can be defined not only by its outcome but also as an *activity* in its own right; (2) it is possible that the product of the architect's work – the project – does not define the artifact in a definitive manner. In addition, I propose to use Price's *Inter-Action Centre* and Friedman's *Flatwriter* as examples.

Just like in Banham's *Environment-Bubble*, in the *Inter-Action Centre* project [63 . 64] Price reduces the architectural artifact to its status of *inhabitable device*. Both are works that can be identified with the paradigm of a "*machine à habiter*" (inhabitable machine), to use Le Corbusier's expression (more than Le Corbusier's own work, as Banham argues in the conclusion of *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*[515]). However, whereas the bubble creates a microclimate, the *Inter-Action Centre* is mainly an assembling game. It can be seen as an object – as a *variable* mechanical device – but the status to which Price reduces the artifact is not exactly that of an object. The *Inter-Action Centre* is a construction whose purpose is not just related to its *variability* but above all to its *manipulation*. The object has a relationship of dependency towards the agents responsible for its manipulation. Much in the same way as *Lego*[516] or *Meccano*[517] constructions do not fulfil their recreational purpose if they are built according to certain instructions and then are left like that, the *Inter-Action Centre* provides pieces that are supposed to be permanently combined and recombined.

As the name suggests, by designing the *Inter-Action Centre* (and similarly to what occurs with *Fun Palace*), Price proposes to define "work of architecture" as an **inter-active device**. That is the inter-active condition that the artifact is reduced to.

I say "condition", and not "function" – the term I used for the *Environment-Bubble*. It is true that *Environment-Bubble* is a construction whose existence is light and fleeting, like that of a balloon filled with hot air. But the *Inter-Action Centre*, which is more robust, exists mainly through the action of those who inhabit and manipulate it. Without that action it is just a bundle of materials. The *Inter-Action Centre* is a project that accomplishes the paradigm defined by Friedman when he states that "an unused building is nothing more than a ruin".

Similarly, Friedman's *Flatwriter* [31 . 32] is a work that depends on its receivers. However, the two projects are assigned different times of action. They act in the context of the *project's procedures* that lead to the definition of a form. In his work, Friedman does not create an artifact to be manipulated by the users *in the*

[515] Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*.
[516] http://www.lego.com/en-us/Default.aspx.
[517] http://www.meccano.com

process of inhabiting, but rather a mechanism for them to define the artifact they will inhabit beforehand. Instead of a habitable device, what is at stake is a project device.

By enunciating *Flatwriter*, Friedman proposes to define "work of architecture" as a ***project*** **inter-active device**. That is the inter-active status that the act of designing a project is reduced to.

In these three works, different roles are assigned to those who inhabit them.

Although radically questioning the material definition of "architectural artifact", *Environment-Bubble* illustrates the most usual meaning of the user's role. An artifact is provided that serves as support or shelter for everyday life. In *Inter-Action Centre*, the user is offered the possibility of manipulating the artifact, and of redefining it. Given the recreational function of the equipment, inhabiting it specifically means manipulating it. Finally, what Friedman has to offer the user in his *Flatwriter* is the possibility to be responsible, *a priori,* for the definition of the artifact that he will inhabit.

Taking into account the sequence of stages "design-build-inhabit", in *Inter-Action Centre* and in *Flatwriter*, the user's action is extended to cover the definition of artifact – it is extended to the project stage or the inhabiting stage, respectively. The user has an active role, either in determining the form of the work, or in manipulating it through use. This is due to the nature of the statements that define "what the work is". *Inter-Action Centre* and *Flatwriter* are not just proposals for a concept of "architectural artifact". In as far as each work proposes a "distribution of tasks" between the architect and the user, it also proposes a concept of "project" and a concept of "architect". The self-reflexive scope of these works possesses these various dimensions.

Banham and Dallegret: *Environment-Bubble*	The architect designs an artifact. The user inhabits. The work is the definition of an environmental and configurative device.
Price: *Inter-Action Centre*	The architect defines the combinable constituents of an artifact. The user inhabits and manipulates the artifact. The work is the definition of an inter-active device.
Friedman: *Flatwriter*	The architect defines a project device. The user defines the artifact that he wishes to inhabit and does so. The work is the definition of a *project* inter-active device.

While *Environment-Bubble* focuses on the definition of "artifact", in *Inter-Action Centre* and in *Flatwriter,* speculation also comprises the *operativity of the project*. These are works that embody a speculation around the inter-relation system of the so-called "designing". In addition to the definition of artifact, they involve speculation about the interaction between the project designer and the user – an interaction that occurs via the project (*Flatwriter*) or via the artifact (*Inter-Action Centre*).

This is the second meaning of "work of architecture" I would like to identify here – that in which the

work is defined, in a speculative manner, as a system of interaction. Not only the "what" but also the "how" is defined.

I believe that I am not wrong in saying that I have examined the work of architecture from a *functionalist* perspective. Although conceptual speculation is contrary to any type of determinism[518], I have considered these works as speculations specifically regarding *function* – the function of the artifact, of the architect, of the user and of the project.

Based on this conclusion I would like to come to yet another conclusion. All these scopes of self-reflection have a political dimension. Accounting for the role of the artifact, of the architect, of the user and of the project means taking political aspects into account.

In as far as concerns this second definition of "work of architecture" that I just proposed – the project as an interaction system – I believe that the political dimension is clearer. The political theme is precisely social interaction systems. In as far as a project always proposes a social interaction system (namely between the architect and the user), it always implies a political stance. Even when the architect is not aware of this system of interaction, and he merely reproduces an existing system, the production of a project requires him to operate within a specific system of social interaction.

With regard to the function of the artifact, the nature of what is political is different. I made a distinction between the functions of environmental conditioning and spatial configuration of the architectural artifact. I believe that they have different political implications.

Reducing the architectural artifact to an environmental device means reducing it to a purely functional condition. Form is subjugated to the function that the building must fulfil, which has self-reflexive implications regarding the object's formal and material qualities. The framework of values underlying the appreciation of the artifact as a material entity is questioned, as is, simultaneously, the framework of values underlying the appreciation of the project within which the architect defines that artifact. Regarding the aspects that are not strictly objective and quantifiable, that framework of values is socially determined, and, to that extent, it is political. It is the political dimension of form itself (a dimension which, as I argued in the previous chapter, is common to all conceptual works).

The understanding of an architectural artifact as a spatial configuration is a political one, because the focus is on the manner in which the artifact organises and influences actions and behaviours.

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[518] When we look at the history of architecture, these themes have clearly functionalist overtones. The emptying of form in favour of the contemplation of functional or operative aspects – the core of functionalism – characterises the works I just mentioned. However, they are not the same as what has historically been established as "functionalism". Whereas functionalism tends to establish a doctrine (and thus fulfil its positivist nature), the works I refer to are speculative. They do not tend towards the stabilisation of a framework of values and of a method. Instead, in as far as they fulfil a simultaneously propositional (because they are focused on the future) and destructive role (because they are contrary to frameworks of values and canonical methods), they are *speculative.*

In the context of the architecture project, whereas emptying the work only leads to paradoxes, politics is present in all aspects of self-reflexivity.

I have just identified three political dimensions of the project that can emerge in it in a self-reflexive manner. They are the same three aspects that resulted from the reasoning I developed in the subchapter (the emptying of the project and) the "politics" in the project: (1) production, (2) organisation of space and (3) factors of artistic appreciation of the project. However, in as far as concerns production, I shall narrow it down to the systems of interaction between the architect and the inhabitant, and the role the project plays as intermediary between those agents. I am focusing mainly on the achievement of the *project* (the definition of its form), rather than on the material achievement of the *artifact*. I would thus like to continue the argument by examining this aspect of production. The purpose of this is to propose a third approach to the formulation of the concept of "work of architecture".

The artistic nature of a project is usually assessed according to characteristics related to its formal quality. It is not relevant for the present argument whether, in some cases, that quality is limited to the more abstract characteristics of space and form, or whether it includes multi-sensorial characteristics. In any case, the question is the level of satisfaction that perception is capable of providing (the level of sophistication of the observer's sensibility does not have to be considered here).

This perspective on what is *artistic* in the architectural project is not only the direct consequence of Alberti's definition of "project", according to which this is the autonomous entity that is the culmination and embodiment of the architect's work. This dissertation does not challenge that assumption. Instead, I refer to the framework of artistic appreciation of the project that is the result of what is understood as "idea" in Alberti's time – the idea that focuses on the design given by the architect to the artifact.

In *Environment-Bubble*, design is taken to a minimal function through its radical subjugation to functional reasons. This happens to the point that the task of formal definition is only focused on the elements that are not even parietal – *par excellence*, the object of design in architecture. As I said, in *Flatwriter* and in *Inter-Action Centre*, functional reasoning is not limited to the sphere of the artifact and extends to the sphere of the systems of interaction involved in the project. In those works, "design as the architect's task" and "design as definition of form" are relativized, either because the architect abandons the decisions that are external to him, or because it is not fixed.

Nevertheless, in both projects there is a task of definition of form – a design task. Friedman defines a system in which the definition of form can happen, and, consequently, determines the "type of design" that the work, in its infinite variations, will acquire. Price designs the various constructive constituents of the *Inter-Action Centre* that may be combined and recombined.

The last possibility that I intend to enunciate is the architect's work almost becoming purely

administrative. The architect eliminates (or practically eliminates) design and is limited to making administrative decisions – that is, managing actions – similarly to what happens in art since the time of Duchamp's readymades.

For example, this is what happens with Lacaton & Vassal's option to "choose and set up prefabricated greenhouses" instead of "designing a building", such as the *House in Coutras* [94 . 95 . 96]. Instead of "building according to the drawings used to define form", "instructions for assembly are followed". The greenhouse is subject to a double re-functionalization: it ceases to be a device for conditioning and spatial configuration for plants and serves to accommodate people; it ceases to be an anonymous building and becomes a work of authorship. As with Duchamp's readymade, this is the result of the dislocation of the artifact from one context to another.

Without dislocation, this is a process of double re-functionalization similar to what happens when an artifact is occupied for a new purpose. I have often mentioned this strategy of architectural production, as well as the specific conditions in which it can acquire the status of "work of architecture". In addition to production itself, this kind of strategy is highly dependent on factors of recognition of the action as "work".

Finally, I would like to mention the project for the Place Léon Aucoc, in Bordeaux, also by Lacaton & Vassal, once again [97]. In this case there is neither dislocation of the artifact nor a change in use. The square only goes from being "a pre-existing square" to "square whose form was determined by the architects (through non-modification)". The only change it is submitted to is gaining the status of a work by the French duo – a new artistic status.

These three works do not follow the canons of production neither in terms of the project's production (because the architect's task is not to design) nor in terms of the production of the artifact (because the task is not "to build according to the drawing", or, simply it is not *to build*). I believe that these works question the definition of "work of architecture", more than the previous ones. Furthermore, they are the closest to administrative operativity, which is characteristic of conceptual art, and they are the most conceptual works that I could identify in the context of architectural projects and *in current historical circumstances*. Additionally, they prove that withdrawing the design gives way to the most radical of themes – the actual need for what is usually called "project design". *Necessity* is at core of the architecture project (its artifactual function as a support for life), and it is in *necessity* that the architecture project's definition can be more profoundly questioned.

And, by being questioned, poetically revisited.

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